

TRAVEL: THE KARAKORAM HIGHWAY / FICTION BY NATHAN ENGLANDER

The Atlantic Monthly

MARCH 1999

AMERICA LOST MORE
THAN 500 SHIPS AND NEARLY
57,000 LIVES FIGHTING ON
TWO OCEANS DURING
THE SECOND WORLD WAR.
A NEW LOOK AT HOW
WE WON

VICTORY AT SEA

BY DAVID M. KENNEDY

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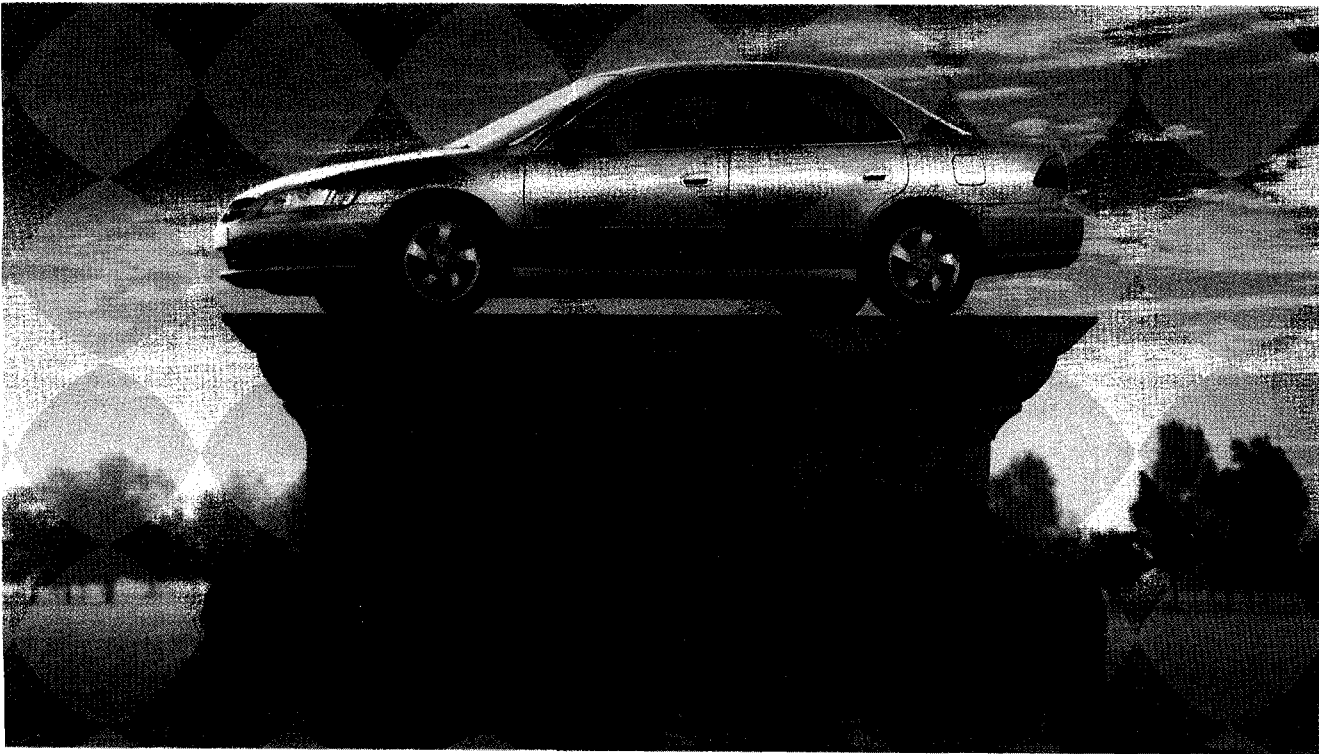
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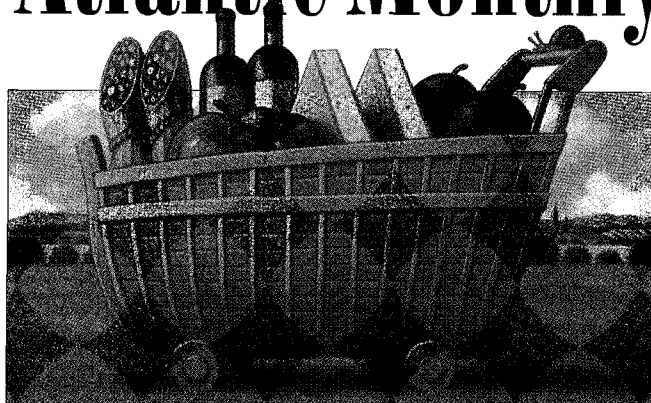


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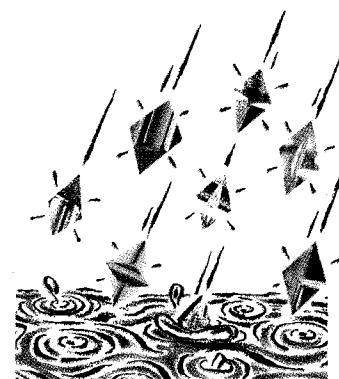
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Page 18



Page 102



Page 28

REPORTS

18 Notes & Comment: The Market as God

The Supreme Being of religious worship has sometimes been defined as omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. Hmmm. The business pages embrace an uncannily similar theology.

by Harvey Cox

24 Urban Life: Pick Your Part

The author writes, "We got in a long line of guys with hopeful expressions on their faces and socket wrenches in their hands, paid our one dollar apiece at the gate, and went in."

by Ian Frazier

28 Foreign Affairs: How to Steal a Diamond

Little happens in Namaqualand, except "leakage."

by Matthew Hart

HUMOR, FICTION, & POETRY

77 The Gilgul of Park Avenue

A short story
by Nathan Englander

88 Dooryard Flower

A poem
by Ellen Bryant Voigt

51 Victory at Sea

Recent movies and books have celebrated the land battles of the Second World War. But for the United States the war began as a contest of sea power. The naval struggles in the Atlantic and the Pacific were vastly different but ultimately proved to be militarily decisive. And yet for many Americans the naval campaigns are the least familiar part of the conflict. A distinguished historian looks afresh at how the Second World War was waged upon the oceans.

by David M. Kennedy

91 Can of Worms

There is a time-honored method, involving a wooden stake and a metal bar, whereby the skilled baiters of the Florida Panhandle can call worms out of the ground by the hundreds and even the thousands—some of the best earthworms in the world, fishermen claim. One day the government decided to levy a new tax on this harvest.

by Kenneth Brower



101 Knot

A drawing
by Guy Billout

BOOKS

108 Taming the Savage Noble

At Home With the Marquis
de Sade, by Francine du
Plessix Gray

by Francis X. Rocca

114 What Makes Poetry "Poetic"?

The Sounds of Poetry, by
Robert Pinsky

by David Barber

116 Brief Reviews

by Phoebe-Lou Adams

ARTS & LEISURE

42 Travel: On Top of the World

Our correspondent ventures along the 800-mile length of the Karakoram Highway, the treacherous high-altitude track linking China and Pakistan.

by Jeffrey Tayler

102 Food: Doing Good by Eating Well

The founders of the Slow Food movement believe, happily, that the best way to preserve endangered regional foods is to consume them.

by Corby Kummer

OTHER DEPARTMENTS

6 77 North Washington Street/Contributors

10 Letters

16 The March Almanac

119 The Puzzler

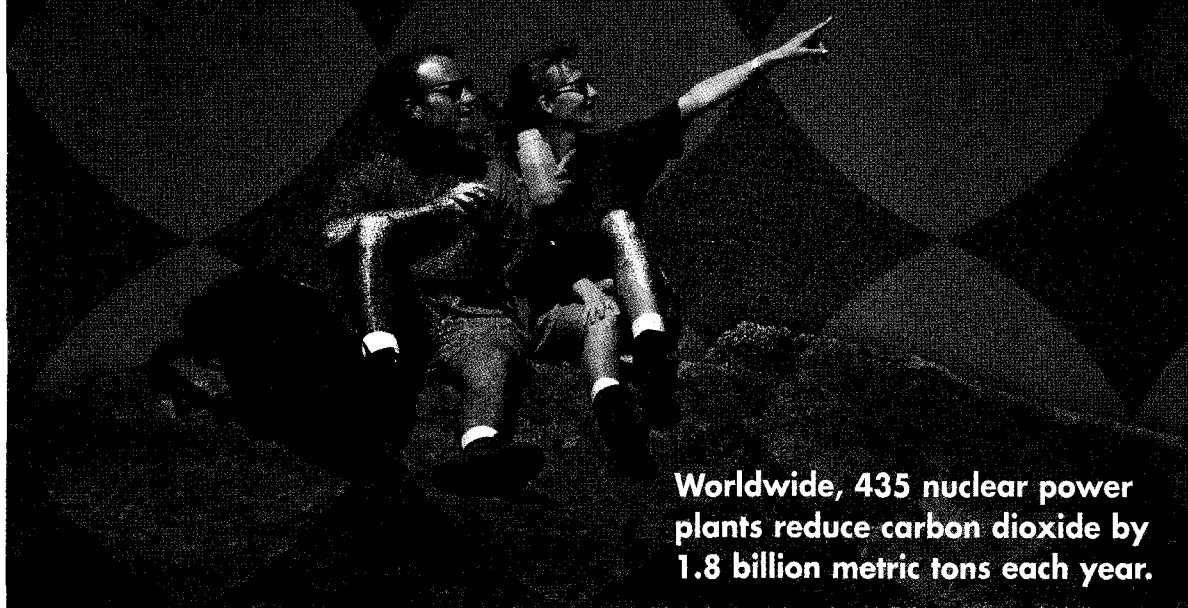
by Emily Cox and
Henry Rathvon

120 Word Court

by Barbara Wallraff

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Gary Kelley

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77 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET

ON the eve of the Great Crash, in 1929, President Herbert Hoover commissioned a group of social scientists to document the state of American society. Their study drew a word picture of the typical American (male, naturally), who, country-bred, now lived in a city, drove an automobile, and “radioed” in the evenings. “He was living better than his parents had ever dreamed of living,” David M. Kennedy, the author of this issue’s cover article, “Victory at Sea,” writes in *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929–1945*.

He had just cast his first presidential vote, in 1928, for Herbert Hoover, the most competent man in America, maybe in the world. In that same year he married a girl three years younger than he. She gave up her job to have their first baby. They started to think of buying a house, perhaps in one of the new suburbs. Life was just beginning.

And their world was about to come apart.

In *Freedom From Fear*, Kennedy, who is the Donald J. McLachlan Professor of History at Stanford University, chronicles on an epic scale the vicissitudes of history that interrupted the saga of hope and progress. Kennedy, a frequent *Atlantic Monthly* contributor, stresses not continuity but difference—

social, racial, economic, governmental—between the America of 1945 and the pre-Depression America of the 1920s. What changed the country the most, we asked him recently—the Depression, the New Deal, or the Second World War? That was the very question on his mind, Kennedy replied, when he began writing his book, and he was now in no doubt as to the answer: the war.

Kennedy ranks the New Deal last, though only because the transformative forces released by the Depression and the war were so profound. It took the cornucopian government spending of the Second World War to end the Depression, a calamity both vast and intimate that scarred a generation. The Second World War, the subject of “Victory at Sea,” proved to be perhaps the hottest forge of change in American history. It brought the American people, Kennedy writes, “as far as imagination could reach, and beyond, from the ordeal of the

Great Depression and . . . opened apparently infinite vistas to the future.”

That future was not given; it was won by the suffering, sacrifice, and courage of the thousands of typical Americans who fought through to victory. —THE EDITORS



STEVE GLADFELTER/STANFORD UNIV.

CONTRIBUTORS

Phoebe-Lou Adams (Brief Reviews) has been on the staff of *The Atlantic Monthly* for fifty-four years. She has written Brief Reviews, under a variety of column titles, since 1952.

David Barber (“What Makes Poetry ‘Poetic’?”) is the assistant poetry editor of *The Atlantic*. He is the author of *The Spirit Level* (1995), which won the Terrence Des Pres prize for poetry.

Guy Billout (“Knot”) has received many awards for his magazine and advertising work, including gold and silver medals from the Society of Illustrators. He is the author of several children’s books, including *Journey* (1995), and is a regular contributor to *Le Monde*, in Paris.

Kenneth Brower (“Can of Worms”) is a frequent contributor to *The Atlantic*, specializing in ecological issues.

Harvey Cox (“The Market as God”) is a professor of divinity at Harvard Uni-

versity. His most recent book is *Fire From Heaven* (1994).

Nathan Englander (“The Gilgul of Park Avenue”) lives in Jerusalem. His work has appeared in *American Short Fiction* and *Story*. His story in this issue will appear in *For the Relief of Unbearable Urges*, a collection of his fiction to be published by Knopf next month.

Ian Frazier (“Pick Your Part”) is the author of *Family* (1994) and *Coyote v. Acme* (1996). He is at work on a book about the Pine Ridge Indian reservation, in South Dakota.

Matthew Hart (“How to Steal a Diamond”), an editor of the trade magazine *Rapaport Diamond Report*, is the author of the novels *The Male of the Species* (1993) and *Into the Purple Duchy* (1995), and has just completed *Rough*, a thriller about the diamond trade.

Gary Kelley (cover art) is an illustrator who has received twenty gold and silver medals from the Society of Illustrators. His work has appeared in *Time*,

Rolling Stone, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Harper’s*.

David M. Kennedy (“Victory at Sea”) is the Donald J. McLachlan Professor of History at Stanford University. His article in this issue will appear, in slightly different form, in his book *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929–1945*, to be published by Oxford in May.

Francis X. Rocca (“Taming the Savage Noble”) is the managing editor of *The American Spectator*. He has written for *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Times Literary Supplement*.

Jeffrey Tayler (“On Top of the World”) lives in Moscow. His first book, *Siberian Dawn*, was published last month. He is at work on a book about traveling the Congo River.

Ellen Bryant Voigt (“Dooryard Flower”) lives in Vermont. Her most recent collection of poems is *Kyrie* (1995). A book of her essays, *The Flexible Lyric*, will be published in the fall.

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LETTERS

America's Magenot Line

Paul Bracken's recent article "America's Magenot Line" (December *Atlantic*) left me asking myself one question: Is this 1999 or 1923?

Bracken claims that forty-five conventionally armed Chinese missiles "could virtually close Taiwan's ports, airfields, waterworks, and power plants, and destroy the oil-storage facilities," thus shutting down the world's nineteenth largest economy. I don't know, and Bracken didn't tell us, the precise technical characteristics of these miracle weapons, or the quality of the troops that would target and fire them, but assuming that both are the best in the world, could that few missiles possibly bring Taiwan to its knees? A few months ago we launched nearly that many missiles just to kill some Afghan peasants and their Saudi paymaster, but when the dust settled, most of the peasants, and certainly the paymaster, were still standing. What reason do we have to believe that the results would be any different on Taiwan?

Thomas Lasater Allensworth
Wichita Falls, Texas

Paul Bracken correctly notes that the fixed, nonhardened, and undefended bases essential to the U.S. military posture in Asia are untenable when threatened by credible ballistic-missile forces. He expresses disdain for U.S. foreign-policy planners and military strategists and for the course (active missile defense) he imagines they will select as a counter to Asian missile development. Bracken recommends no explicit course, instead closing his piece with the advice that the United States should learn to adapt to, rather than counter directly, the initiatives of Asian powers. He trots out the decades-old (but still as illogical as ever) assertion that an active defense of U.S. lives and property will be interpreted as a threat by our ballistic-missile-

armed adversaries. Why shouldn't we defend ourselves, and encourage all others to do likewise? Although Bracken is correct to point out that the offense has most of the advantages against the defense in ballistic-missile warfare, he attempts to perpetuate the similarly decades-old but decidedly untrue objection that only a perfect defense is of any benefit against ballistic-missile attack. Given a choice between no defense at all and a costly but imperfect defense, I suspect our troops would select the latter.

Bracken argues that China, though not really eager to attack U.S. forces, will checkmate our use of forward bases in Asia with an implicit threat of subjecting them to ballistic-missile attack. One could just as easily argue that in such a scenario the United States could ignore any such threat and proceed to reinforce these bases in a crisis, confident that China would think twice before stepping on Superman's cape. Brinkmanship works both ways.

In the absence of a scenario that Bracken might have provided to illustrate his ideas for the ideal U.S. future posture vis-à-vis potential Asian adversaries, I can only infer that he advocates U.S. disengagement, leaving the Chinese, the Japanese, the Indians, and perhaps the Russians to slug it out among themselves for dominance of their continent. Disregarding the damage that would be done to the global economy in such a conflict protracted over the next century or so, the United States would still be left with the same problem: one or more missile-armed Asian adversaries threatening our high-value economic assets. The difference is that in the Bracken future those assets would be domestic, not forward-based. At that juncture no one would be crowing about the money we saved by abandoning a military role in Asia and by forgoing a ballistic-missile defense. Is this a preferable future for U.S. citizens?

James A. Wooster
Sumner, Wash.



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I would like to highlight some issues overlooked in "America's Maginot Line."

In essence the article argues the following main points:

1. East Asian militaries threaten U.S. forward bases with ballistic missiles.
2. This development makes U.S. forward-deployed bases in East Asia a de facto "American Maginot Line" that is vulnerable to attack.
3. Ergo the U.S. claim to superpower status in twenty-first-century Asia is in serious jeopardy.

I would argue that all three points are either invalid or not as significant as the article claims.

Great powers have always maintained forward bases on foreign soil. These bases, in one way or another, have always been vulnerable to various kinds of threats. However, the existence of such threats does not mean that the great power ceases to be great—a major implication of Bracken's argument.

In 1941 Pearl Harbor, Clark Field, Wake Island, and Guam were all vulnerable to Japanese attack. Japan successfully attacked all four U.S. bases. Yet Japan gained no long-term strategic benefit from U.S.-based vulnerability. Indeed, by exploiting that vulnerability, Japan sowed the seeds for its own destruction. I can assure you that Asian military and political leaders are fully cognizant of these facts, and they have drawn the appropriate conclusion: attack a U.S. base—be it with Zero, Val, and Kate aircraft or with ballistic missiles—and suffer the inevitable consequences.

U.S. credibility is not—contrary to Paul Bracken's assertion—eroded just because a potential aggressor can lob a few ballistic missiles at U.S. bases. The fact of certain American retaliation is far more relevant to any strategic or foreign-policy calculation in Asia.

Gregory J. Walko
Plymouth, Minn.

Paul Bracken replies:

The targets of Chinese missiles against Taiwan would be commercial airports, electric-power plants, oil stocks, and ports. The United States did not target such things for permanent closure in its attacks on Iraq or Afghanistan. The United States could easily shut down the Baghdad electric system,

throwing Iraq into chaos, but chooses not to do so.

James Wooster confuses national missile defense of the United States with forward missile defense of overseas bases. I do not believe it is politically possible to defend forward bases but not American citizens. No one seems to have realized this connection yet, but it is a multibillion-dollar one. Defending forward bases means a national missile defense for the United States. Being a superpower on the cheap, as we have been for the past decade, is over with.

Finally, the issue is not U.S. bases on foreign soil but rather the freedom to use them and the benefits they provide. By paying enough money and accepting enough restrictions, we can keep bases forever. Mr. Wooster fails to note the case in which the French blocked British use of air bases in France in 1940 for fear of reprisals. In the December, 1998, air strikes on Iraq the United States was not allowed to use bases in Turkey or Saudi Arabia. I agree that brinkmanship works both ways. Being the world's superpower through brinkmanship is a far cry from staying on top because of an overwhelming conventional advantage, as the United States did in the 1990s. This is an enormous change. Brinkmanship is bound to accelerate the move toward weapons of mass destruction; it already has, as the logical trump card against forward bases. "Thinking about the unthinkable" is returning to international politics after a brief absence following the Soviet collapse, and it is not clear to me that this is good for the United States.

Verbs in Place

Stephen Budiansky's "Lost in Translation" (December *Atlantic*) began humorously enough with an apt Monty Python reference, but I figured that the initial laughs would eventually be supplanted by a thoughtful and rigorous treatment of the issues related to electronic translation. However, the author continued to cause a chuckle when he made this assertion in the middle of the article: "In Japanese—as in most languages, with the notable exceptions of English and the Romance languages—verbs regularly come at the end of the sentence."



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This is simply not true. Most of the world's 6,000 or so languages are classified as subject-verb-object (SVO)—English, yes, being one of them. But languages with verb-final sentences (usually SOV) are actually quite rare. In fact, Japanese and German are the only major verb-final languages that spring readily to mind (though with regard to German, given all its recent permutations, who knows where the verb is ending up these days).

Dan Dillon
Chicago, Ill.

Stephen Budiansky replies:

Being funny on purpose is so hard that I usually settle for being funny inadvertently. But I think the joke is on Dan Dillon this time. Though the matter is admittedly controversial, the sampling surveys that have been done suggest that verb-final is indeed the largest category, with just about half the world's languages; verb-medial is a close second; and verb-initial (as in Arabic) a distant third. Verb-final languages include Japanese, Korean, German, Dutch, the Turkic languages (Turkish, Uzbek, Kazakh, and others), the Iranian languages (Persian, Kurdish, Tajik, Pushtu), most of the Indic languages (Punjabi, Tamil, and many others), most of the Tibeto-Burman languages (Tibetan, Burmese, and several hundred others), Slovene, Basque, Eskimo, and many Native American languages.

"Ready, Read!"

Nicholas Lemann's ideas on how to fix America's worst public schools ("Ready, Read!," November *Atlantic*) are attractive and destined to fail, both of which characteristics stem from his oversimplification.

We can even leave aside such important but contentious issues as what schools are for and whether standardized tests are good measures of school performance. Lemann's proposal won't even achieve success for that subset of people who believe that schools should focus on imparting basic skills and knowledge and that standardized-test scores are a good measure of how well they are achieving this.

Lemann proposes that "nonperform-

ing schools be put into the hands of higher authorities" who would "institute a prescribed curriculum that has been carefully researched and field-tested and has been proved to work." There are five serious oversimplifications here.

First, no such program exists. Lemann quotes Success for All's founder, Robert Slavin, as saying, "There's nothing on most of these programs. No data! Organized research with control groups and reports every year, no matter what the data show—that just doesn't happen." The exception is Success for All, but that program's proven success is in reading—not writing, math, science, or any other subjects normally part of the curriculum.

Second, Lemann offers no evidence for his conclusion that despite the many factors he acknowledges to have been at work at P.S. 114, the key to the improvement there "was the imposition of a tightly defined, proven reading curriculum." If factors outside the Success for All design were important, such as "a good new principal, a higher budget, a turnover in the teaching staff, a cooperative union," then simply imposing Success for All on nonperforming schools will not work.

Third, Success for All is not simply a prescribed curriculum. Beyond changing a school's entire approach to teaching reading, Success for All includes intensive professional development for teachers, a family support team in each school, and specially trained teachers who immediately and intensively tutor students who are falling behind. Slavin has been quoted as saying, "If you left out one of the elements, it would leave a hole through which the gains of the other two elements would leak out." Success for All's outcomes research is for the program as a whole, not for the curriculum in isolation. Stripping out and replicating but one element of a successful program has a distinguished record of failure that crosses all fields of public policy.

Fourth, Lemann's prescription ignores his own statement that "Success for All can't work unless a school's principal and teachers cooperate." How this is to be achieved when the program is imposed on the school by higher authority is apparently left as an exercise for the

reader. Slavin's secret ballot, whereby 80 percent of teachers must choose the program before it comes in (though a basic part of the Success for All design), is incompatible with Lemann's prescription. So are the education, field trips, and multiple ballots that preceded the program's introduction at P.S. 114.

Finally, not every subject can be made a priority. Lemann describes well how P.S. 114 has achieved success in reading by focusing the bulk of its time, money, space, and energy there. I hope it is obvious that the bulk of an institution's resources cannot simultaneously be devoted to reading, to math, to writing, and to science. The strategy of focusing on reading cannot be scaled up to the entire curriculum.

H. L. Mencken once observed that "for every complex social problem, there is a simple solution that's wrong." It seems a prescient epitaph for Lemann's proposal.

Kennard T. Wing
*OMG Center for Collaborative Learning
Philadelphia, Penn.*

Nicholas Lemann makes a persuasive case for imposing on failing schools a centralized curriculum, which by definition limits the flexibility and creativity of individual teachers, schools, and school districts. If this trend toward centralization of authority were occurring solely in failed schools, Lemann's argument would be not only persuasive but also convincing. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Throughout our country, state governments are promulgating highly defined education standards and forcing compliance through comprehensive statewide testing programs. The results of these tests are then publicly disseminated in a comparison among the state's schools. Those of us in education know that "what is tested will be taught." Thus the common test creates a common, statewide curriculum. Moreover, President Bill Clinton's proposal for national testing in the areas of mathematics and reading for all fourth- and eighth-graders moves this centralization of authority beyond the state level to the national. And, as Lemann wrote, this centralization of authority is occurring with little discussion or debate. The long-term effects on our children's education are unknown, though research

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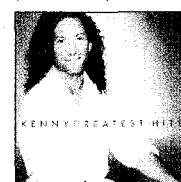
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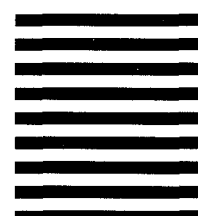
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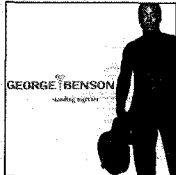
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on similar efforts in Britain raises serious questions about the efficacy of such an approach.

Marc F. Bernstein
Superintendent of Schools
North Merrick, N.Y.

Nicholas Lemann replies:

Kennard Wing seems on the verge of saying that education problems are so complex that they can't be meaningfully dealt with through any policy other than localism. In his letter he's trying to make Success for All appear more particular and unknowable than it really is: the quotation from Slavin about the lack of good data was meant (as my article made clear) as a criticism of other programs, not of Success for All, and although I did say that teacher cooperation is important, my article also clearly showed that P.S. 114 adopted Success for All because central administrators, not teachers, wanted it. I came away from P.S. 114 with the strong impression that the prescribed reading curriculum was the main reason for dramatic improvement in teaching students to read.

Marc Bernstein is right. It isn't just in failing schools that centralization is taking place, and there isn't enough public discussion about the issue. I wrote my article partly in the hope of encouraging such discussion. But, not to be coy, I'm much more in favor of centralization, especially in curriculum, than he seems to be. Other advanced countries have national curricula, and because the U.S. economy requires some means of directly comparing people's skills, the lack of a national curriculum here has led to an unusually heavy reliance on IQ-style tests like the SAT. Better, I think, to have everyone cramming for tests of mastery of basic skills.

Advice & Consent

Douglas Brinkley's "In the Kerouac Archive" (November *Atlantic*) is a welcome beginning to the process of opening up the study of Kerouac's papers and granting Kerouac his proper status in our literary culture. Brinkley's excerpts and commentary correct a number of mistaken ideas about Kerouac that were promoted by the conservative critics who dismissed his work as anti-intellectual,

violent, and un-American. But I would take issue with Brinkley's implicit assertion that because Kerouac outlined chapters of *On the Road*, and made use of journal entries and notes in composing the novel, somehow we should not consider the form of the novel revolutionary, since the stories about its spontaneous composition are "myths." More than ten years of teaching *On the Road*, *The Subterraneans*, and other Kerouac novels has taught me that the key to understanding Kerouac's theory of Spontaneous Prose is its parallel with jazz, especially bop. If we think of chapter outlines, journal entries, and other preparatory material as a first draft of the novel, this implies that Kerouac was working like a modernist writer focused on craft and revision, doing nothing new. That is not the case: for Kerouac, the performance of writing spontaneously mattered most. His notebooks, journals, outlines, and other preparatory material should be understood as a form of rehearsal—like a jazz musician practicing improvisation—building up to the performance of composition, preparing mentally for the textual re-creation of the subject matter being written about. In order to get published, Kerouac of course had to revise *On the Road*; but in *The Subterraneans*, *Visions of Cody*, *Desolation Angels*, *Doctor Sax*, *Big Sur*, and other works, Kerouac's aesthetic was fully worked out, and should receive due credit as a revolutionary change of direction for American prose.

William J. Savage Jr.
Northwestern University
Evanston, Ill.

In "Should Election Day Be a Holiday?" (October *Atlantic*), Martin P. Watenberg states that Saturday would probably not work as Election Day, in part because of objections from "Orthodox Jews and Mormons to putting Election Day on their Sabbath."

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) worships on Sunday, not Saturday. The Seventh-day Adventist Church celebrates the Sabbath on Saturday.

David E. Monsen
Ocean Shores, Wash.

Mr. Monsen is correct. The mistake was caused by an editing error.

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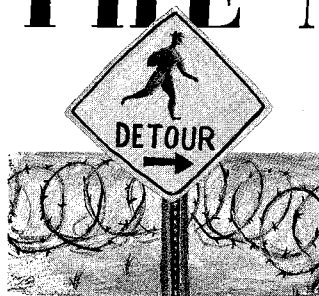
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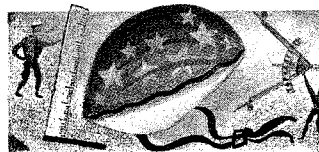


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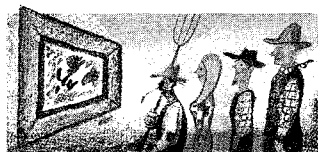
March is the peak month for illegal attempts to cross the U.S.-Mexican border, judging by the number of people apprehended by the U.S. Border Patrol. The agency makes, on average, nearly 125,000 apprehensions each March; the average in other months is fewer than 100,000. The peak is attributed largely to the approach of the growing season, which brings thousands of migrant workers north. Because of the sheer number of attempts, March is a bad month for crossing-related deaths; however, most deaths occur during the summer, because of the heat. Recent efforts to tighten border security have resulted mainly in rechanneling, rather than reducing, illegal immigrant flows. For example, over the past several years the Border Patrol's Operation Gatekeeper, based in San Diego, has virtually eliminated traffic deaths among migrants trying to cross the area's highways—but the number of drownings in the fast-moving All-American Irrigation Canal, 100 miles to the east, soared.

Health & Safety

March 10: The first mandatory standards for bicycle helmets go into effect today. The standards, set by the Consumer Product Safety Commission, include provisions to ensure that helmets stay on, and require that helmets for children under the age of five cover more of the head than most previous helmets have. And starting this month most pills, pow-



ders, and other products containing vitamins, minerals, herbs, or other substances intended to supplement the diet must carry a "Supplement Facts" panel similar to the "Nutrition Facts" panels on most processed foods. This requirement, spurred by a 1994 law, stipulates that labels must give a breakdown of active ingredients and suggest appropriate amounts to take. It also sets parameters for the kinds of health and nutrition claims that may be made. Americans spend more than \$6 billion annually on dietary supplements.



Arts & Letters

In a boon for art-lovers in America's heartland, exhibits showcasing two remarkable new acquisitions open this month—one at the Indianapolis Museum of Art, the other at the Blanton Museum of Art, at the University of Texas at Austin. Both acquisitions resulted from combinations of gifts and purchases, and each was designated for a relatively low-profile institution largely so that it would be a central, and well-displayed, part of the museum's holdings. The IMA acquired 101 paintings and prints by Paul Gauguin and his Brittany-based Pont-Aven School from the Swiss collector Samuel Josefowitz. With them the museum, which has a significant collection of works by Georges Seurat and other neo-Impressionists, becomes one of the leading U.S. repositories of post-Impressionist art. The Blanton Museum acquired one of the largest private collections of Old Master paintings and drawings, consisting of nearly 700 works by such artists as Rubens, Poussin, and Correggio. The collection was assembled over two generations by the art historians William Suida and Robert and Bertina Suida Manning.



Food

This month the first line of foods designed to actively lower cholesterol will appear on supermarket shelves. "Ensemble" products, made by Kellogg's, include pasta, frozen entrees, and cakes; they will make their debut in the Midwest. Most will carry a label, approved by the Food and Drug Administration, stating that they may reduce the risk of heart disease when eaten "as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol"—a caveat that many consumers, pleasantly surprised to find scientifically sanctioned snacks and microwave-ready meals, may be tempted to ignore. Ensemble foods are the latest in a growing number of "functional foods"—foods enriched with special-purpose nutrients and marketed to health-conscious consumers. In 1993 the FDA ruled that the manufacturers of such foods may make clinically proven health claims. Ensemble's claim is based on the soluble fiber its products contain. Soluble fiber is, of course, also available in grains, fruits, and beans.

The Skies

March 1: Venus, which all month will be the first point of light visible in the western sky at dusk, lies atop Jupiter and Mercury, with Saturn high above. **2:** Full Moon, also known this month as the Sap, Crust, and Lenten Moon. **20:** At 8:46 P.M. EST, the Vernal Equinox. **31:** Full Moon, which, because it is the second of the month, is a Blue Moon.



Government

March 1: A United Nations treaty banning anti-personnel land mines takes effect today for the first 40 countries to have ratified it. The treaty, known as the Ottawa Convention, became international law in only nine months, record time; Burkina Faso provided the necessary 40th ratification last September. Ratifying countries must destroy their stockpiles of mines within four years and clear all mines from their territory within 10 years. More than 90 other countries to date have signed the treaty and await legislative action. However, neither number includes Russia, China, or the United States, which maintains that mines are needed in Korea to protect U.S. troops and deter invasion from the north.



100 Years Ago

William James, writing in the March, 1899, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "In children we observe a ripening of impulses and interests in a certain determinate order. Creeping, walking, climbing, imitating vocal sounds, constructing, drawing, calculating, possess the child in succession. . . . Of course, the proper pedagogic moment to work in skill and to clinch the useful habit is when the native impulse is most acutely present. Crowd on the athletic opportunities, the mental arithmetic, the verse-learning, the drawing, the botany, or what not, the moment you have reason to think the hour is ripe. It may not last long; and whilst it continues you may safely let all other occupations take a second place. In this way you economize time and deepen skill; for many an infant prodigy, artistic or mathematical, has a flowering epoch of but a few months."



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The Market as God

Living in the new dispensation

A FEW years ago a friend advised me that if I wanted to know what was going on in the real world, I should read the business pages. Although my lifelong interest has been in the study of religion, I am always willing to expand my horizons; so I took the advice, vaguely fearful that I would have to cope with a new and baffling vocabulary. Instead I was surprised to discover that most of the concepts I ran across were quite familiar.

Expecting a terra incognita, I found myself instead in the land of déjà vu. The lexicon of *The Wall Street Journal* and the business sections of *Time* and *Newsweek* turned out to bear a striking resemblance to Genesis, the Epistle to the Romans, and Saint Augustine's City of God. Behind descriptions of market reforms, monetary policy, and the convolutions of the Dow, I gradually made out the pieces of a grand narrative about the inner meaning of human history, why things had gone wrong, and how to put them right. Theologians call these myths of origin, legends of the fall, and doctrines of sin and redemption. But here they were again, and in only thin disguise: chronicles about the creation of wealth, the seductive temptations of statism, captivity to faceless economic cycles, and, ultimately, salvation through the advent of free markets, with a small dose of ascetic belt tightening along the way, especially for the East Asian economies.

The East Asians' troubles, votaries argue, derive from their heretical deviation from free-market orthodoxy—they were



practitioners of "crony capitalism," of "ethnocapitalism," of "statist capitalism," not of the one true faith. The East Asian financial panics, the Russian debt repudiations, the Brazilian economic turmoil, and the U.S. stock market's \$1.5 trillion "correction" momentarily shook belief in the new dispensation. But faith is strengthened by adversity, and the Market God is emerging renewed from its trial by financial "contagion." Since the argument from design no longer proves its existence, it is fast becoming a postmodern deity—believed in despite the evidence. Alan Greenspan vindicated this tempered faith in testimony before Congress last October. A leading hedge fund had just lost billions of dollars, shaking market confidence and precipitating calls for new federal regulation. Greenspan, usually Delphic in his comments, was decisive. He believed that regulation would only impede these markets, and that they should continue to be

self-regulated. True faith, Saint Paul tells us, is the evidence of things unseen.

Soon I began to marvel at just how comprehensive the business theology is. There were even sacraments to convey salvific power to the lost, a calendar of entrepreneurial saints, and what theologians call an "eschatology"—a teaching about the "end of history." My curiosity was piqued. I began cataloguing these strangely familiar doctrines, and I saw that in fact there lies embedded in the business pages an entire theology, which is comparable in scope if not in profundity to that of

by **Harvey Cox**

Illustration by Alison Seiffer



THE BOMBAY SAPHIRE MARTINI. AS ARRANGED BY ULLA DARNI.
POUR SOMETHING PRICELESS.

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Thomas Aquinas or Karl Barth. It needed only to be systematized for a whole new *Summa* to take shape.

■ ■ ■

At the apex of any theological system, of course, is its doctrine of God. In the new theology this celestial pinnacle is occupied by The Market, which I capitalize to signify both the mystery that enshrouds it and the reverence it inspires in business folk. Different faiths have, of course, different views of the divine attributes. In Christianity, God has sometimes been defined as omnipotent (possessing all power), omniscient (having all knowledge), and omnipresent (existing everywhere). Most Christian theologies, it is true, hedge a bit. They teach that these qualities of the divinity are indeed *there*, but are hidden from human eyes both by human sin and by the transcendence of the divine itself. In "light inaccessible" they are, as the old hymn puts it, "hid

*Current thinking
assigns to The Market
a wisdom that in the
past only the gods have
known. It knows our
deepest secrets and
darkest desires.*

from our eyes." Likewise, although The Market, we are assured, possesses these divine attributes, they are not always completely evident to mortals but must be trusted and affirmed by faith. "Further along," as another old gospel song says, "we'll understand why."

As I tried to follow the arguments and explanations of the economist-theologians who justify The Market's ways to men, I spotted the same dialectics I have grown fond of in the many years I have pondered the Thomists, the Calvinists, and the various schools of modern religious thought. In particular, the theologians' rhetoric resembles what is sometimes called "process theology," a

relatively contemporary trend influenced by the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. In this school although God *wills* to possess the classic attributes, He does not yet possess them in full, but is definitely moving in that direction. This conjecture is of immense help to theologians for obvious reasons. It answers the bothersome puzzle of theodicy: why a lot of bad things happen that an omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient God—especially a benevolent one—would not countenance. Process theology also seems to offer considerable comfort to the theologians of The Market. It helps to explain the dislocation, pain, and disorientation that are the result of transitions from economic heterodoxy to free markets.

■ ■ ■

Since the earliest stages of human history, of course, there have been bazaars, rialtos, and trading posts—all markets. But The Market was never God, because there were other centers of value and meaning, other "gods." The Market operated within a plethora of other institutions that restrained it. As Karl Polanyi has demonstrated in his classic work *The Great Transformation*, only in the past two centuries has The Market risen above these demigods and chthonic spirits to become today's First Cause.

Initially The Market's rise to Olympic supremacy replicated the gradual ascent of Zeus above all the other divinities of the ancient Greek pantheon, an ascent that was never quite secure. Zeus, it will be recalled, had to keep storming down from Olympus to quell this or that threat to his sovereignty. Recently, however, The Market is becoming more like the Yahweh of the Old Testament—not just one superior deity contending with others but the Supreme Deity, the only true God, whose reign must now be universally accepted and who allows for no rivals.

Divine *omnipotence* means the capacity to define what is real. It is the power to make something out of nothing and nothing out of something. The willed-but-not-yet-achieved omnipotence of The Market means that there is no conceivable limit to its inexorable ability to convert creation into commodities. But again, this is hardly a new idea, though it has a new twist. In Catholic theology, through what is called "transubstantiation," ordinary bread and wine become

vehicles of the holy. In the mass of The Market a reverse process occurs. Things that have been held sacred transmute into interchangeable items for sale. Land is a good example. For millennia it has held various meanings, many of them numinous. It has been Mother Earth, ancestral resting place, holy mountain, enchanted forest, tribal homeland, aesthetic inspiration, sacred turf, and much more. But when The Market's Sanctus bell rings and the elements are elevated, all these complex meanings of land melt into one: real estate. At the right price no land is not for sale, and this includes everything from burial grounds to the cove of the local fertility sprite. This radical desacralization dramatically alters the human relationship to land; the same happens with water, air, space, and soon (it is predicted) the heavenly bodies.

At the high moment of the mass the priest says, "This is my body," meaning the body of Christ and, by extension, the bodies of all the faithful people. Christianity and Judaism both teach that the human body is made "in the image of God." Now, however, in a dazzling display of reverse transubstantiation, the human body has become the latest sacred vessel to be converted into a commodity. The process began, fittingly enough, with blood. But now, or soon, all bodily organs—kidneys, skin, bone marrow, sperm, the heart itself—will be miraculously changed into purchasable items.

Still, the liturgy of The Market is not proceeding without some opposition from the pews. A considerable battle is shaping up in the United States, for example, over the attempt to merchandise human genes. A few years ago, banding together for the first time in memory, virtually all the religious institutions in the country, from the liberal National Council of Churches to the Catholic bishops to the Christian Coalition, opposed the gene mart, the newest theophany of The Market. But these critics are followers of what are now "old religions," which, like the goddess cults that were thriving when the worship of the vigorous young Apollo began sweeping ancient Greece, may not have the strength to slow the spread of the new devotion.

Occasionally backsliders try to bite

the Invisible Hand that feeds them. On October 26, 1996, the German government ran an ad offering the entire village of Liebenberg, in what used to be East Germany, for sale—with no previous notice to its some 350 residents. Liebenberg's citizens, many of them elderly or unemployed, stared at the notice in disbelief. They had certainly loathed communism, but when they opted for the market economy that reunification promised, they hardly expected this. Liebenberg includes a thirteenth-century church, a Baroque castle, a lake, a hunting lodge, two restaurants, and 3,000 acres of meadow and forest. Once a favorite site for boar hunting by the old German nobility, it was obviously entirely too valuable a parcel of real estate to overlook. Besides, having been expropriated by the East German Communist government, it was now legally eligible for sale under the terms of German reunification. Overnight Liebenberg became a living parable, providing an invaluable glimpse of the Kingdom in which The Market's will is indeed done. But the outraged burghers of the town did not feel particularly blessed. They complained loudly, and the sale was finally postponed. Everyone in town realized, however, that it was not really a victory. The Market, like Yahweh, may lose a skirmish, but in a war of attrition it will always win in the end.

Of course, religion in the past has not been reluctant to charge for its services. Prayers, masses, blessings, healings, baptisms, funerals, and amulets have been hawked, and still are. Nor has religion always been sensitive to what the traffic would bear. When, in the early sixteenth century, Johann Tetzel jacked up the price of indulgences and even had one of the first singing commercials composed to push sales ("When the coin into the platter pings, the soul out of purgatory springs"), he failed to realize that he was overreaching. The customers balked, and a young Augustinian monk brought the traffic to a standstill with a placard tacked to a church door.

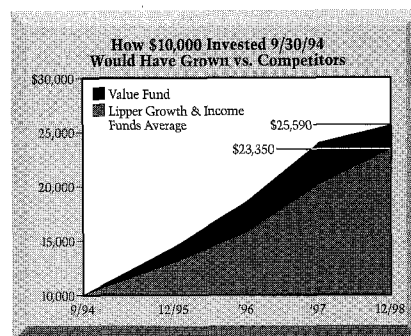
It would be a lot harder for a Luther to interrupt sales of The Market's amulets today. As the people of Liebenberg discovered, everything can now be bought. Lakes, meadows, church buildings—everything carries a sticker price. But this practice itself exacts a cost. As every-

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thing in what used to be called creation becomes a commodity, human beings begin to look at one another, and at themselves, in a funny way, and they see colored price tags. There was a time when people spoke, at least occasionally, of "inherent worth"—if not of things, then at least of persons. The Liebenberg prin-

*The Market offers
the religious benefits
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without the awkward-
ness of denominational
commitment.*

ciple changes all that. One wonders what would become of a modern Luther who tried to post his theses on the church door, only to find that the whole edifice had been bought by an American billionaire who reckoned it might look nicer on his estate.

It is comforting to note that the *citizens* of Liebenberg, at least, were not put on the block. But that raises a good question. What *is* the value of a human life in the theology of The Market? Here the new deity pauses, but not for long. The computation may be complex, but it is not impossible. We should not believe, for example, that if a child is born severely handicapped, unable to be "productive," The Market will decree its death. One must remember that the profits derived from medications, leg braces, and CAT-scan equipment should also be figured into the equation. Such a cost analysis might result in a close call—but the inherent worth of the child's life, since it cannot be quantified, would be hard to include in the calculation.

It is sometimes said that since everything is for sale under the rule of The Market, nothing is sacred. But this is not quite true. About three years ago a nasty controversy erupted in Great Britain when a railway pension fund that owned the small jeweled casket in which the re-

mains of Saint Thomas à Becket are said to have rested decided to auction it off through Sotheby's. The casket dates from the twelfth century and is revered as both a sacred relic and a national treasure. The British Museum made an effort to buy it but lacked the funds, so the casket was sold to a Canadian. Only last-minute measures by the British government prevented removal of the casket from the United Kingdom. In principle, however, in the theology of The Market, there is no reason why any relic, coffin, body, or national monument—including the Statue of Liberty and Westminster Abbey—should not be listed. Does anyone doubt that if the True Cross were ever really discovered, it would eventually find its way to Sotheby's? The Market is not omnipotent—yet. But the process is under way and it is gaining momentum.

■ ■ ■

Omniscience is a little harder to gauge than omnipotence. Maybe The Market has already achieved it but is unable—temporarily—to apply its gnosis until its Kingdom and Power come in their fullness. Nonetheless, current thinking already assigns to The Market a comprehensive wisdom that in the past only the gods have known. The Market, we are taught, is able to determine what human needs are, what copper and capital should cost, how much barbers and CEOs should be paid, and how much jet planes, running shoes, and hysterectomies should sell for. But how do we know The Market's will?

In days of old, seers entered a trance state and then informed anxious seekers what kind of mood the gods were in, and whether this was an auspicious time to begin a journey, get married, or start a war. The prophets of Israel repaired to the desert and then returned to announce whether Yahweh was feeling benevolent or wrathful. Today The Market's fickle will is clarified by daily reports from Wall Street and other sensory organs of finance. Thus we can learn on a day-to-day basis that The Market is "apprehensive," "relieved," "nervous," or even at times "jubilant." On the basis of this revelation awed adepts make critical decisions about whether to buy or sell. Like one of the devouring gods of old, The Market—aptly embodied in a bull or a bear—

must be fed and kept happy under all circumstances. True, at times its appetite may seem excessive—a \$35 billion bailout here, a \$50 billion one there—but the alternative to assuaging its hunger is too terrible to contemplate.

The diviners and seers of The Market's moods are the high priests of its mysteries. To act against their admonitions is to risk excommunication and possibly damnation. Today, for example, if any government's policy vexes The Market, those responsible for the irreverence will be made to suffer. That The Market is not at all displeased by downsizing or a growing income gap, or can be gleeful about the expansion of cigarette sales to Asian young people, should not cause anyone to question its ultimate omniscience. Like Calvin's inscrutable deity, The Market may work in mysterious ways, "hid from our eyes," but ultimately it knows best.

Omniscience can sometimes seem a bit intrusive. The traditional God of the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer is invoked as one "unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid." Like Him, The Market already knows the deepest secrets and darkest desires of our hearts—or at least would like to know them. But one suspects that divine motivation differs in these two cases. Clearly The Market wants this kind of x-ray omniscience because by probing our inmost fears and desires and then dispensing across-the-board solutions, it can further extend its reach. Like the gods of the past, whose priests offered up the fervent prayers and petitions of the people, The Market relies on its own intermediaries: motivational researchers. Trained in the advanced art of psychology, which has long since replaced theology as the true "science of the soul," the modern heirs of the medieval confessors delve into the hidden fantasies, insecurities, and hopes of the populace.

One sometimes wonders, in this era of Market religion, where the skeptics and freethinkers have gone. What has happened to the Voltaires who once exposed bogus miracles, and the H.L. Menckens who blew shrill whistles on pious humbuggery? Such is the grip of current orthodoxy that to question the omniscience of The Market is to question the inscrutable wisdom of Provi-

dence. The metaphysical principle is obvious: If you *say* it's the real thing, then it must *be* the real thing. As the early Christian theologian Tertullian once remarked, "*Credo quia absurdum est*" ("I believe because it is absurd").

■ ■ ■

Finally, there is the divinity's will to be *omnipresent*. Virtually every religion teaches this idea in one way or another, and the new religion is no exception. The latest trend in economic theory is the attempt to apply market calculations to areas that once appeared to be exempt, such as dating, family life, marital relations, and child-rearing. Henri LePage, an enthusiastic advocate of globalization, now speaks about a "total market." Saint Paul reminded the Athenians that their own poets sang of a God "in whom we live and move and have our being"; so now The Market is not only around us but inside us, informing our senses and our feelings. There seems to be nowhere left to flee from its untiring quest. Like the Hound of Heaven, it pursues us home from the mall and into the nursery and the bedroom.

It used to be thought—mistakenly, as it turns out—that at least the innermost, or "spiritual," dimension of life was resistant to The Market. It seemed unlikely that the interior castle would ever be listed by Century 21. But as the markets for material goods become increasingly glutted, such previously unmarketable states of grace as serenity and tranquillity are now appearing in the catalogues. Your personal vision quest can take place in unspoiled wildernesses that are pictured as virtually unreachable—except, presumably, by the other people who read the same catalogue. Furthermore, ecstasy and spirituality are now offered in a convenient generic form. Thus The Market makes available the religious benefits that once required prayer and fasting, without the awkwardness of denominational commitment or the tedious ascetic discipline that once limited their accessibility. All can now handily be bought without an unrealistic demand on one's time, in a weekend workshop at a Caribbean resort with a sensitive psychological consultant replacing the crotchety retreat master.

■ ■ ■

Discovering the theology of The Market made me begin to think in a differ-

ent way about the conflict among religions. Violence between Catholics and Protestants in Ulster or Hindus and Muslims in India often dominates the headlines. But I have come to wonder whether the real clash of religions (or even of civilizations) may be going unnoticed. I am beginning to think that for all the religions of the world, however they may differ from one another, the religion of The Market has become the most formidable rival, the more so because it is rarely recognized as a religion. The traditional religions and the religion of the global market, as we have seen, hold radically different views of nature. In Christianity and Judaism, for example, "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and all that dwell therein." The Creator appoints human beings as stewards and gardeners but, as it were, retains title to the earth. Other faiths have similar ideas. In the Market religion, however, human beings, more particularly those with money, own anything they buy and—within certain limits—can dispose of anything as they choose. Other contradictions can be seen in ideas about the human body, the nature of human community, and the purpose of life. The older religions encourage archaic attachments to particular places. But in The Market's eyes all places are interchangeable. The Market prefers a homogenized world culture with as few inconvenient particularities as possible.

Disagreements among the traditional religions become picayune in comparison with the fundamental differences they all have with the religion of The Market. Will this lead to a new jihad or crusade? I doubt it. It seems unlikely that traditional religions will rise to the occasion and challenge the doctrines of the new dispensation. Most of them seem content to become its acolytes or to be absorbed into its pantheon, much as the old Nordic deities, after putting up a game fight, eventually settled for a diminished but secure status as Christian saints. I am usually a keen supporter of ecumenism. But the contradictions between the world views of the traditional religions on the one hand and the world view of the Market religion on the other are so basic that no compromise seems possible, and I am secretly hoping for a rebirth of polemics.

No religion, new or old, is subject to empirical proof, so what we have is a contest between faiths. Much is at stake. The Market, for example, strongly prefers individualism and mobility. Since it needs to shift people to wherever production requires them, it becomes wrathful when people cling to local traditions. These belong to the older dispensations and—like the high places of the Baalim—should be plowed under. But maybe not. Like previous religions, the new one has ingenious ways of incorporating pre-existing ones. Hindu temples, Buddhist festivals, and Catholic saints' shrines can look forward to new incarnations. Along with native costumes and spicy food, they will be allowed to provide local color and authenticity in what could otherwise turn out to be an extremely bland Beulah Land.

There is, however, one contradiction between the religion of The Market and the traditional religions that seems to be insurmountable. All of the traditional religions teach that human beings are finite creatures and that there are limits to any earthly enterprise. A Japanese Zen master once said to his disciples as he was dying, "I have learned only one thing in life: how much is enough." He would find no niche in the chapel of

*Suppose that a modern
Luther, trying to post
his theses on the
church door, found
that the whole edifice
had been bought by an
American billionaire.*

The Market, for whom the First Commandment is "There is *never* enough." Like the proverbial shark that stops moving, The Market that stops expanding dies. That could happen. If it does, then Nietzsche will have been right after all. He will just have had the wrong God in mind. ☛



Pick Your Part

*Looking for a rearview mirror or a clutch fan
in the far reaches of Los Angeles*

MAN, I love L.A. The L.A. area is like they tilted America westward and all across the country small towns came loose and slid down and piled up there. I grew up in a small town in Ohio, and when I'm in L.A., I'm often so giddy I might have just finished sliding down there myself. I

actually know very little about the city besides what I've seen of it in movies and on television. As it turns out, though, that's a lot. A while back I flew to LAX Airport on my first visit to the city in twenty years. At the airport I got into a

rental car and drove around the city for eight hours straight, and every place looked familiar to me. I had not guessed during those many hours of watching *CHiPs* and *The Rockford Files* back in the seventies that I was being educated

by Ian Frazier

to feel comfortable in L.A. I drove and drove—up the coast to Malibu, up Topanga Canyon, along Foothill Boulevard, along Rodeo Drive, down multi-lane streets disappearing in the distance into weirs of palm-tree trunks. Tall *Washingtonia* palms punctuated the horizon like upside-down exclamation

points at the beginnings of Spanish sentences. On Sunset Boulevard I pulled over to look at one of these palms close up. Its corky trunk, higher up than I could reach, was embossed with tacks and heavy-duty staples that had once held lost-cat notices and ads for classes in martial arts.

I like to walk in L.A. too. Something about the place makes me want to ramble, on foot as much as by car. My wife's sister and her husband live in Silver Lake, and the last time I stayed with them, I walked their neighborhood all around. This part of the city is hilly; Fargo Street, with an incline of thirty-two degrees, is one of the steepest streets in L.A. My relatives live in a modest house at the bottom of a hill, but as you go up the hills, the houses get fancier and fancier. The streets begin to make hairpin turns and traverse the slope, the high white-stucco walls press closer on both sides, the sidewalk shrinks to a curb, and sternly worded warning signs of private security systems proliferate.

Finally, at the top of a hill, with the hazy, humming cityscape stretching below, the road comes to an end at a high wrought-iron gate in front of the fanciest house yet. Sometimes at the gate an armed and uniformed man employed by a private police force is reading a newspaper and sitting on a metal folding chair.

MY brother-in-law had an '83 Ford pickup truck, which he mostly used to haul sets for plays and other theatrical stuff. My brother-in-law is an actor and a theatrical man of all work. As near as I can determine, acting in L.A. is divided into two kinds: acting for TV or movies, where they pay you, and acting for the theater, where you pay them. The work my brother-in-law used the truck for was mainly the you-pay-them kind; so when he broke one of the truck's outside rearview mirrors, he did not send an assistant out for a replacement and mark the cost down to "miscellaneous." Instead he went looking all over for the cheapest '83 Ford pickup rearview mirror he could find. Knowing my peripatetic L.A. restlessness, he took me along.

We went from one used-parts store to another, farther and farther into the unendingness of greater L.A. Finally we got to a place he had heard about but had never been to before. The sign above the sheet-iron fence along the road said PICK YOUR PART, with the subheading "The world's largest self-service auto recycler." A smiling octopus on the sign held various automotive tools in its legs. My brother-in-law comes from Louisiana, and has a connoisseur's appreciation of L.A. He told me that Pick Your Part is famous among people who fix cars in L.A.

Pick Your Part is a fifty-four-acre lot containing junk cars of all makes and models. For a small admission fee people seeking car parts can go into the lot and explore; if they find the part they're looking for, they remove it themselves, present it at a window by the exit, pay a price usually less than a fifth of what a regular parts place would charge, and take it home. They can't try the part out in the parking lot, however; signs all over say you're not allowed to work on cars there.

Pick Your Part is in Sun Valley, in the northwestern reaches of the city. Some

miles beyond it is Pacoima and the site on Foothill Boulevard where the police beat Rodney King. On the horizon to the east are low mountains covered with scrubby greenery that blooms yellow in the spring. To the west and south are the grayish silhouettes of the gravel heaps and towers and conveyors of a concrete company. We got in a long line of guys with hopeful expressions on their faces and socket wrenches in their hands, paid our one dollar apiece at the gate, and went in.

Before us the vast acreage of junk cars stretched on beneath a sky that was the hazy bluish-gray of a blank video screen. Pillars here and there indicated the kind of vehicle to be found in that particular district—Ford, GMC, Toyota, and so forth. My brother-in-law headed off in the direction of the Ford pillar. I proceeded by the principle of the random walk, following aisles and rows vertically and horizontally until I was deep in the middle of the lot. I stopped by a car of a make I couldn't identify, which had a single bright-yellow cowboy boot sitting on its roof. Here in the middle of all these silent machines that had once made so much noise and smoke seemed to me the most peaceful place I had been in L.A. From where I stood I could see no other people. The occasional clinking of feet kicking parts on the concrete pavement was the only nearby sound. The cars, none with tires, sat on small steel pedestals supporting the axles at each corner. On the ground around each car was an arrested explosion of its parts, scattered on glistening stains of oil. The cars had been placed in rows facing each other, all with their hoods raised, like soldiers in a raggedy crossed-swords salute.

None of the cars were really old. They seemed to be of the age of cultural artifacts that we have just recently forgotten, like the rock group Toto. Many had once had bright paint jobs, but now they were all the basic color of cars, which is the color of oil. As I stood there daydreaming, suddenly a guy popped out from somewhere. He had on a muscle shirt and a U.S. Post Office baseball cap. "I need a clutch fan on a three-oh-one engine," he said. "Have you seen any three-oh-ones around?" I didn't know what he was talking about, but I said I hadn't. Then, to account for myself, I

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LOCATIONS

said I was looking for a rearview mirror from an '83 Ford. "Fords are over there," he said, gesturing vaguely. I began walking in that direction. Farther along the row I came upon a guy standing legs astraddle in a car's engine cavity, pushing down with all his weight on the handle of a big pipe wrench.

Unexpectedly, I emerged into a wider aisle, a kind of thoroughfare where forklift trucks came and went. Some of the forklifts were carrying cars that had been so long in the lot that almost nothing remained of them but body and frame; the empty shells of their sides wobbled and shivered as they passed by. I followed the aisle to an open piece of ground at the edge of the lot where the forklifts were taking the cars. Here an even bigger forklift (a machine called an Aljon, I later learned) awaited them. Beneath the tines of its fork the Aljon had two pincers making a claw about four feet long. When a car was deposited before it, the Aljon grabbed a bumper with the pincers, yanked it off, and tossed it onto a pile of bumpers. Then it did the same to the other bumper. Next the Aljon flipped the hood from the engine (if there still was a hood) with its fork, opened the pincer claw wide, and lowered it into the engine housing as the fork smashed and flattened the windshield and roof. Then the claw seized the engine block and lifted, shaking and worrying it until with a grinding giving-way it came free, trailing cables and wires. The Aljon then tossed the engine block onto a small mountain of engine blocks nearby, and a smaller forklift took the car's last remains to a crusher across the way.

Through the cracked and blue-tinted window of the Aljon I could see its operator—sunglasses, baseball cap, straggly blond hair, mouth in a plumb-bob horizontal line. With several control levers at the fingers of each hand he made the Aljon move without lurch or stutter, taking out the engine blocks as casually as if he were shucking peanuts. In a telepathic moment I realized that the Aljon operator was having a wonderful time. I watched him, mesmerized. When you watch like that, often other people will show up to watch with you; soon I noticed that a stocky guy in sunglasses and a baggy blue T-shirt was next to me. He and I got to talking. He told me that his

name was Ernesto and that he was looking for a rearview mirror too—a left-side mirror from an '86 Toyota. On the only '86 Toyota he had found so far, the left-side mirror was already gone, but he had taken a long, narrow piece of curved plastic with holes in it, which he said went to a door molding.

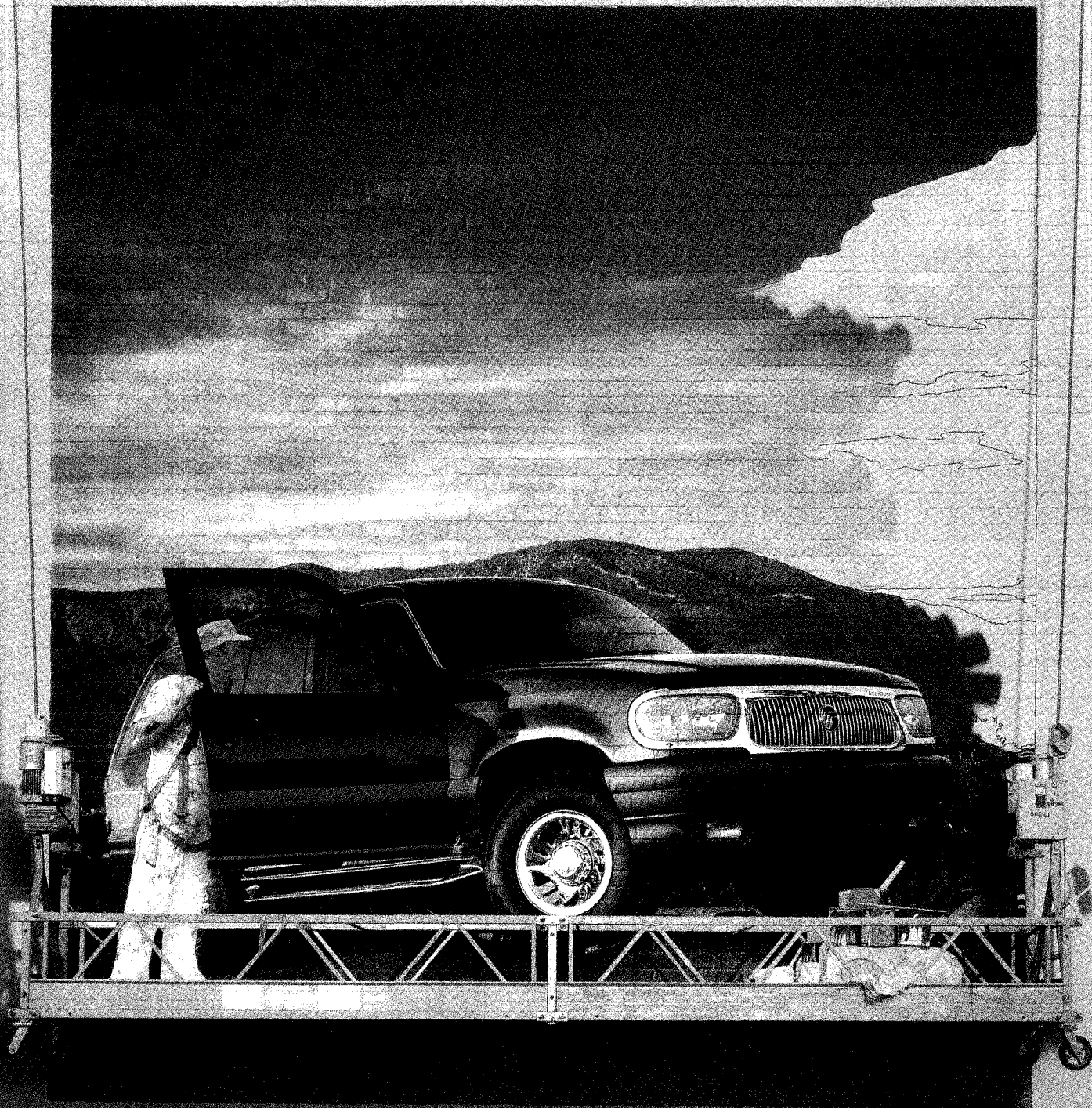
He said, "I came to L.A. from El Salvador in 1989, and when I was first here I bought a '71 Toyota Celica. It was a good car but after three or four years it didn't have enough power to go on the freeway. I was living in East L.A., and I left it on the street until I get money to fix it. I got one ticket, I got another ticket, and my brother-in-law told me if I want to fix it, pay the tickets—otherwise the city will tow the car away. So I left it and didn't pay the tickets and the city took it. A few months after that I was in this lot with my brother-in-law looking for a part, and my brother-in-law called to me, 'Ernesto! Come here!' There was my car—I recognized it because it had a hole in the side where we had fixed it and I had put my initials on the patch. I was very sad to see my car here. I had a lot of memories in that car, and now it was so destroyed. When we got home, my brother-in-law was making fun of me, telling everybody how sad I was about my car."

Ernesto stood watching the Aljon for a while in silence. Then he said, "You love your car, you take care of him, you wash him, you wax him. Then you see him in the jaws of a monster like that . . ."

PROBABLY everyone here was with his brother-in-law. I said good-bye to Ernesto and went looking for mine, again proceeding randomly, dawdling through the rows of cars. Scattered inside them were the kinds of things people leave in cars—owner's manuals, parking stubs, expired insurance policies in clear-plastic packets, soda cans and bottles, fast-food containers, books of car-wash coupons. Often when you give someone a ride home, and she opens the passenger-side door to get in, there is a bunch of stuff on the front seat; what you say then, almost always, is "Oh, just throw that stuff in the back." In the backs of these cars was a great miscellany of items about which that had no doubt once been said, and which would now remain in the back forevermore.

A white-plastic dustpan and a pack of Eve cigarettes (Buick Monte Carlo); a water-damaged copy of *Macroeconomics*, by Robert J. Gordon (another Monte Carlo); a tube of Eucerin moisturizing cream (Chevy Citation); an invitation to a Thanksgiving Free Turkey Lunch at the Victory Outreach Church in El Sereno, California (Datsun 200 SX); a piece of kid's artwork signed "Khadija" (Volkswagen Rabbit); Polaroid snapshots of the same woman in different hairstyles (Toyota Celica GT); a booklet called "Handbook of Rights for Mental Health Patients" (two-tone Chevy Malibu Classic)—all these the crusher would one day claim. I reached through the Malibu's missing rear window and took out the mental-health handbook and read it awhile. Then, afraid of spirits, I put it back. Mixed in among the relics were cans of oil treatment, gasoline additive, radiator sealant, and other old-age medicines for cars. Some of the back seats were such a jumble of homely intimacy and automotive chaos that I had to look away.

Finally, at the distant end of a wider aisle I saw my brother-in-law. He is a big man, easy to see. He can fix anything, from a computer to a carburetor to a massive outdoor sound system; playing one of the witches in *Macbeth*, as he did recently, he was funny and deeply scary at the same time. His wife says he gets upset once in a while, but I have never seen him in anything but a sunny mood. He had not found the rearview mirror but didn't seem to mind. He had come across a tire tool that he thought he could use. We got in a line of oily guys at a window by the exit to pay for it. The guy in front of us was wheeling an assortment of parts in a baby stroller. The guy behind us had the sides of his head shaved bare and his top hair in a long ponytail flowing down his back, and studs and rings in different parts of his body. His arms were oil past the elbows, and he cradled a power-steering pump and hose (I asked) in his hands. He and a studded companion were beaming in satisfaction. My brother-in-law and I paid for the tire tool, and then drove on various freeways and other roads to an open-air stand where we got Mexican food so hot it tanned my tongue like boot leather. I considered this an excellent day in L.A. ☼



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How to Steal a Diamond

In an arid region north of Cape Town, diamond theft is viewed as the proper work of man. This attitude extends across much of the southern part of Africa, draining profits and fueling political unrest

AT a diamond cutter's in Johannesburg not long ago, a touch of the saw very nearly ruined an 8.5-carat stone. "It had a hole in one side and two gletzes on the other," said Derek Henderson, the beefy, laconic Englishman who runs the operation. A gletz is a visible flaw inside a diamond. Henderson gazed at the shattered gem as he continued: "We took a cut through

the gletzes and had just started to polish off the hole when another gletz shot through the stone."

by Matthew Hart

Henderson's cutters managed to salvage part of the diamond, keeping their losses under \$20,000.

But sometimes a gem will burst into powder when a saw hits the skin of a structural flaw—a flaw that may be invisible even through the lens of an ordinary

loupe. And that's not the only danger.

"I'd bought a blue, a good sky-blue," a well-known Johannesburg diamond dealer told me. A blue is a "fancy," a category of nonwhite diamond; the more vivid the color, the higher the price. "We started polishing, putting in facets. Suddenly, as the cutter added a facet, the color changed from blue to light blue—from two hundred and sixty thousand dollars a carat to forty thousand dollars a carat." The dealer had been aiming for a four-carat finished stone: in an instant \$880,000 evaporated before his eyes. He was lucky, though. "When we put in the next facet, the color jumped right back."

Like the stones themselves, the diamond trade is highly unpredictable. Gemstone diamonds have no intrinsic value; their worth depends on the buyer's act of faith. Keenly aware of this, the diamond world harbors a secret fear that the trade itself might hit some hidden flaw and crumble. Still, so far so good.

Consider this: Two years ago a pair of South African adventurers retrieved a 23-carat intense-pink fancy from the bottom of the Chicapa River, in Angola. They sold it at the diamond bourse in Johannesburg for \$4.4 million. The buyers polished it into a 10-carat gem. They reportedly sold it for \$9 million to middlemen, who are said to have sold it in turn to the Sultan of Brunei's brother for \$20 million—this for a stone the size of a raisin.

MOST diamonds come from big recovery plants—places fortified with razor wire, alive with arms, popping with the mechanized jets of air that blast the gems from streams of gravel rattling through the plants. Security is a ceaseless preoccupation: the global output of "rough," as uncut diamonds are called, is worth about \$7 billion a year, and "leakage," or theft from the mining process, is relentless. Perhaps this is inevitable—after all, General Motors doesn't have to worry that workers on the production line are swallowing doors, but a 10-carat stone goes down like a pea.

As a result, the diamond trade is awash in contraband. Hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of smuggled diamonds leave Angola every year. Bootlegged goods poured out of Russia, too, until



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1997, when De Beers, the world's largest diamond-mining company, forged an agreement whereby Russia sells at least half its production to the London-based Central Selling Organization—some \$550 million worth of rough each year. The Russians keep the rest for domestic polishing; naturally, some of this joins the sea of smuggled gems.

Less well known to the outside world, but infamous in the trade, is the steady flow of stolen diamonds from Namaqualand, a sandy slab of South Africa along the Atlantic coast. Namaqualand's pan-hot desert and scraped little hills start north of Cape Town and run up to the Orange River, which forms the Namibian border. The ocean breaks on a forbidding shore. Not much happens in Namaqualand—except for the stealing of diamonds. In Namaqualand, stealing diamonds is the proper work of man.

"God put the diamonds here," says Frikkie Mostert, "and He put nothing else. People here think the diamonds belong to them." Mostert runs a diamond-recovery plant in the village of Port Nolloth for the South African company Trans Hex Group. Port Nolloth is on the Diamond Coast, a four-hundred-mile stretch of beach that begins at the Olifants River and extends into Namibia. If anyone is going to be strapping stolen diamonds to homing pigeons, or pressing them under his fingernails, or strolling through the sorting house in boots whose soles have been impregnated with adhesive,

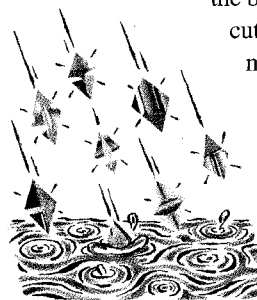
great swath of diamonds lies along the coast, and millions of dollars a year pour into the efforts to retrieve them. The area, land and sea, is a grid of mining concessions. At Kleinsee, where the Buffels River meets the ocean, De Beers strips the shore. Alexkor, South Africa's state-owned mine, controls the beach to the north and maintains a flotilla of in-shore diamond boats. Ten miles inland Trans Hex combs a long-buried former bed of the Orange River. But across the river, in the southwest corner of Namibia, is the real prize—a 10,140-square-mile tract of land identified on maps as Diamond Area 1. It was once the richest diamond ground on earth and still produces an abundance of high-quality stones. Mining rights to the area belong to Namdeb, a consortium of De Beers and the Namibian government. Namdeb holds a special place in the hearts of those who live in Namaqualand, whose arid landscape it helps to water with the only rain that counts there—stolen diamonds.

Beach mines are a thief's delight. In open pits, by contrast, workers rarely come face-to-face with diamonds: heavy equipment scoops out the ore and feeds it to the plant. But on the beach, diamonds sit on the old seabed. Miners strip away the "overburden," non-diamond-bearing sand and gravel, and sweep the bedrock for gems. Until recently they did the sweeping with whisks. Now Namdeb uses huge vacuum machines instead, to make it more difficult for miners to come into direct contact with diamonds. In addition, the mines offer a bounty for every loose stone turned in. So do illicit diamond buyers in Port Nolloth.

Let's say a miner spots a diamond. He may glance around to make sure that security guards are looking the other way, and press the diamond under his fingernail for later transfer to another receptacle, such as his mouth. In the event that members of the security force have been corrupted (always a possibility), he needn't be that careful. The next step is to get the diamond out of the mining area. In one scheme workers smuggle trussed homing pigeons out to the mining areas in lunch boxes. They fit the birds with harnesses, load them with rough, and set

them free. Sometimes the thieves are too ambitious. Security officials at Namdeb caught one thief when they found his pigeon dragging itself along the ground, its harness loaded beyond takeoff capacity.

Another time a thief smuggled in the pieces of a crossbow, later sending a volley of hollow bolts freighted with diamonds arcing over the fence, for retrieval by a confederate. This scheme ended when an unlucky shot fell to earth in front of a security jeep. Diamonds are dropped into the gas tanks of machinery leaving the beach, and inserted into razor cuts in tires; collaborators remove them later. Miners wedge diamonds behind sweatbands, tap them into ears, and insert them in other orifices. At one De Beers mine, security guards caught a thief only because he'd inserted so many gems into



his rectum that he was waddling. Diamonds fluoresce under x-rays, and Namdeb uses x-ray scanners on employees leaving the mining area. But as miners well know, the cumulative health hazards posed by x-rays dictate random use. The scanner always makes a noise, but it is not always taking an x-ray. So the miners take their chances, and diamonds slip through.

A GOOD number of the diamonds filched from Alexkor and Namdeb find their way down the coast to Port Nolloth, a hamlet with few visible means of support but with a flourishing population of BMWs. At the north end of town stands a cluster of neat concrete villas, painted ocher or white. Each has a shiny German car or two parked out front. It is common knowledge in the area that illicit diamonds paid for some of these villas. The south end of town is marked by the pier that serves Trans Hex's tiny recovery plant—Frikkie Mostert's plant. The municipal dock nearby makes a stubby L. A small fleet of forty-foot fiberglass boats, called tupperwares, bobs in the shelter of the reef. Most are independently owned, and contract their services to diamond companies.

On the rare days when the wind subsides, crews and divers pile aboard and the tupperwares go rolling out to sea, trailing suction hoses. Reaching their in-shore concessions, the boats toss on the

*General Motors needn't
worry about workers
swallowing car
doors, but a diamond
goes down like a pea.*

the Diamond Coast is a good place to find him.

Diamonds arrived in Namaqualand millions of years ago, tumbling down the rivers and into the sea. When the ocean receded, some of the diamonds remained on the beach. Others are embedded in gravel on the ocean floor. In short, a



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swell; divers splash into the frigid water. At a depth of a hundred feet they wrestle steel nozzles into the muck. Larger ships work farther out. Indifferent to the heavy seas, remote-controlled tractors lowered from these ships creep along the ocean floor, harvesting gravel.

Although the fleets contribute stolen rough, Port Nolloth really lives off booty

The mines offer a bounty for every loose stone turned in. So do illicit diamond buyers in Port Nolloth.

from the beach digs of Alexkor and Namdeb. The industry knows this; the South African police know it. Mostly they live with it, having little choice.

Consider the last raid on the town, four years ago. With a ferocity born of frustration, officers from the diamond branch of the police pounced on Port Nolloth. They focused on the town's Portuguese, who had fled Angola in 1975, at the end of Portuguese rule, and are thought to be particularly active in the illicit diamond trade.

On the day of the raid the diamond branch gathered its forces near Kleinsee. Vehicles full of heavily armed police officers sped north. A helicopter clattered into the air. They all headed for the Portuguese country club, south of Port Nolloth. The club is surrounded by a wall topped with razor wire. The helicopter raked over the wall and hovered. Combat officers slid down ropes into the green oasis of the grounds and charged the clubhouse.

"They had food," says Derrick Clamptt, a seasoned diamond detective who participated in the raid. "They had booze. They were ready for a party. The diamond scales were all set up, there were loupes—the whole business. But there weren't any diamonds. We were a day early. Later we raided a house and found \$250,000 in cash."

"Yes," adds Koos Jooste, who heads the diamond branch's Cape Town de-

tachment, "but the possession of money is not illegal in South Africa."

THE beaches of Alexkor, the South African state mine, begin only a few miles north of Port Nolloth. By the company's own admission, the mine leaks as much as 30 percent of its goods, amounting to some \$15 million worth of diamonds every year—most of it making its way to Port Nolloth. Newspaper reports assert that the losses may in fact be as high as 45 percent. Still, Alexkor is something of a sideshow; for thieves on the Diamond Coast, Namdeb is the main event.

Every year giant bucket-wheel excavators scoop some 33 million tons of overburden from the beach, adding it to the neat range of hills that Namdeb has created along the coast. Every year some 26 million tons of ore, buried eons ago, is dredged up and returned to the light of day. Namdeb feeds the ore to its mill, which crushes, sifts, and washes it, leaving a gravel concentrate. The concentrate is fed onto conveyor belts and bombarded with x-rays; when the fluorescence that indicates the presence of a diamond is detected, jets of air knock the diamond free.

Namdeb's biggest security problem comes from a historical anomaly—the construction of miners' hostels inside the part of the mine site that includes the high-grade beach. A large population of single men with lots of spare time to think up ways to steal diamonds thus permanently occupies the most sensitive area of a famously rich mine. Miners with luggage pass in and out at will. Criminal syndicates, active at mines throughout the region, conduct a brisk bourse inside Namdeb's hostels. Miners receive anywhere from 60 to 80 percent of a diamond's value, adding the sum to their \$350-a-month wage. Nor is money the only incentive. Coercion is ubiquitous. "The diamond industry has tended to attract all kinds of unsavory characters, not just to steal but to intimidate people, to introduce a general criminal atmosphere," says Sir Alan Grose, the chief of security for De Beers. "Once that gets in place, it's very hard to eliminate."

Reluctant to offend the Namibian government, Namdeb will not raid the hostels. Political delicacy has also pre-

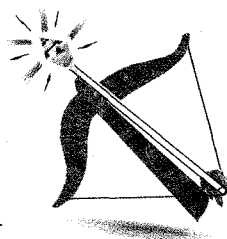
cluded simply closing them: the former guerrillas believed to operate the Namdeb syndicates are veterans of the same organization that now constitutes Namibia's ruling party.

A few years ago Namdeb's beleaguered security force tried a different tack. "They decided to raid the buses," a former De Beers mine executive told me, referring to the vehicles in which miners travel to and from the beach. "The thinking was, if we can't do anything about the hostels, let's stop the buses on the way back. So without warning, security stopped the buses. They didn't find a thing. But a hundred yards back all these tiny parcels littered the road. The miners had chucked them out. Even though the roadblock had been a last-minute operation, word had gotten to the buses in time. That's how completely the syndicates have penetrated security."

De Beers is always trying to improve security, and has developed a low-dose x-ray, called Scannex, a version of which is now being tested at Cape Town's Groote Schuur hospital. If the tests indicate that the dose is safe for daily use, Scannex could close the loophole of random scanning. But the problem of corrupt security is likely to remain. The only real solution would appear to be the removal of the hostels. Unless that happens, Namdeb will stay porous.

"I wouldn't want to put a percentage on our production that goes missing," Sir Alan told me a year ago, "but the larger of the figures you just mentioned is in the ballpark." That figure was 15 percent, the high end of a conservative estimate I'd heard. I had in mind a higher figure. "They'll tell you fifteen percent, but it's more like thirty," a former De Beers executive had warned me. When I tried this higher figure out on Sir Alan, he fixed me with a serene gaze. "I don't think it's ever been much more than thirty percent, honestly."

In 1997, for example, Namdeb collected 786,000 carats from the beach. Offshore its fleet scoured the seabed for another 485,000. Inshore a few tupperwares on commission brought in 135,000 carats more. At, say, \$270 a carat (an insider's estimate of Namdeb's price for rough),



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the reported production adds up to some \$380 million. If workers are stealing 30 percent—in other words, if the \$380 million represents only 70 percent of Namdeb's real output—then thieves are skimming off some \$160 million a year.

The boundaries of Diamond Area 1 exactly match those of the old *Sperrgebiet*, the “forbidden territory” proclaimed by Namibia's German colonial masters in 1908, after a railway laborer shoveling sand from the tracks stumbled across a diamond. South Africa seized Namibia in 1915. Seventy-five years later the Namibians ousted the South Africans. Four years after that, in 1994, Namdeb was formed. Through it all the borders of the *Sperrgebiet* have remained unchanged. The enduring sovereignty is the sovereignty of diamonds.

IN the diamond trade there are effectively no states. Borders are unable to control the flow of goods. Take Botswana, considered a model of civic decorum, with a reputation for husbanding its diamond revenues to improve the conditions of its people. The Jwaneng mine, a joint venture of De Beers and the Botswana government, produces 12 million carats a year. A game park teeming with zebras surrounds the mine, and the nearby village where the miners and their families live is a little Eden, profoundly unlike the calamitous, violent world of neighboring South Africa. Yet miners steal diamonds here, too; a De Beers executive in the capital, Gaborone, told me that South African syndicates have moved in.

South Africa, of course, has added its own special acid to the corrosion of frontiers. During the country's long civil war the army and the African National Congress thrust back and forth across the region's borders, helping to spread economic mayhem throughout the southern part of the continent. The white government in Pretoria is reported to have authorized military intelligence to engage in the illicit diamond trade, further entrenching the activity.

Diamonds have also fed Angola's long civil war—a war that ended with a peace accord in 1994, but only on paper.

The war was reignited late last year by a bloody series of rebel attacks, including one on a remote diamond mine owned by a Vancouver-based company, some of whose directors had clear ties to mercenaries who have acted against the rebels. There are two principal warring factions: the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), headed by José Eduardo dos Santos, the country's President, and the Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), under Jonas Savimbi. The MPLA, which has enjoyed international recognition since 1976, holds the capital, Luanda, and in recent years extended its military reach into regions once controlled by UNITA. In spite of commitments made in 1994, UNITA has refused to relinquish the diamond-rich Cuango Valley and the provinces of Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul, each with valuable diamond fields. The rebels are funded, after all, by the only available asset that meets the dual requirements of portability and easy conversion into cash—diamonds.

“The government has oil, Savimbi has diamonds,” says Edgar J. Dosman, a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for International and Security Studies at York University, in Toronto. In 1996 alone Savimbi ran \$700 million in rough out of Angola. Clearly, UNITA cannot afford to abandon the diamond regions.

The government reaps its share of diamonds too. Ministers openly take positions in diamond-mining joint ventures. Elsewhere a joint-venture partner would furnish money or expertise; in Angola he simply arranges permission to mine.

Next door, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire), the new President, Laurent Kabila, now battling insurgents, is believed to have funded his own insurgency partly by selling diamond and other mineral rights. The ruler ousted by Kabila, Mobutu Sese Seko, maintained an alliance with Savimbi; Kabila's is with the MPLA. The long-term effects of these shifts in power and allegiance remain to be seen.

Helicoptering up Angola's Chicapa River, I could see the vivid scars of illegal digs—illegal in the eyes of the government, perhaps, but “licensed” by

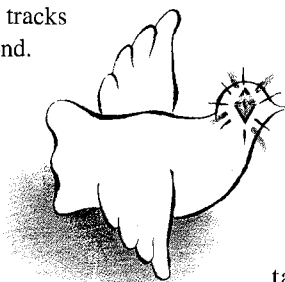
whoever had happened to control the area at the time. The specter rises of a medieval land, a dominion of barons perversely devoted to the sacking of their own domains. In this model the lonely monarch is De Beers, fighting an endless battle for order, at tremendous cost. In a practice known as “mopping up,” the company has often tried to buy as many illicit diamonds as it could; the gems, if allowed to flood the open market, could send prices plummeting virtually overnight. Not long ago, De Beers was spending \$15 million a week mopping up Angolan diamonds alone.

ONE winter morning, in the hard sunlight of Namaqualand, I stood staring down into a pit whose dimensions were roughly those of a twenty-story building covering three football fields. It was part of the Trans Hex Baken mine, which produces diamonds worth, on average, \$500 a carat. It is hard to find better goods than these. At the bottom of this hole, dug from gravel laid down over 15 million years, is a former riverbed. Sometimes Trans Hex locates the plunge basin of a prehistoric waterfall, where handfuls of diamonds may have accumulated. Recovering them involves a lot of digging: Trans Hex estimates that two truckloads of dirt are removed for every carat that makes its way out of the pit and onto someone's finger.

Across the Orange River morning dumped its bin of light onto Diamond Area 1. I could almost hear the pigeons

*De Beers was spending
\$15 million a week
“mopping up”—buying
back—illicit diamonds
from Angola alone.*

stirring. Probably the first few stones of the day were already slipping past the fence. And down on the Diamond Coast, in Port Nolloth, someone would be turning the ignition key in his BMW, tossing his loupe onto the dash, and heading off to work. ☛



MARCH
1999

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

PREVIEW

FILM

The Ninth Annual
Elia Awards

DANCE

Paul Taylor's
Romantic Spring

THEATER

Peters, Bening,
and Spacey
Take the Stage

POPULAR MUSIC

From Industrial
Metal to
Country Rock

JAZZ

Donald Harrison
Varies the Beat

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Film

BY ELLA TAYLOR

THE 1998 ELLA AWARDS

With few exceptions, the critics and the moviegoing public went their separate ways in 1998. Here, then, are my picks of the year, some of which came and went so fast you may have to catch them on video.

Best Picture: With ebullient flair and a sensibility at once playful, savage, and sympathetic, Neil Jordan's extraordinary—and extraordinarily overlooked—*The Butcher Boy* humanizes the growing pains and pleasures of an out-of-control lad growing up in post-Second-World War Ireland.

Runners-up: The butcher boy grows up in *The General*, John Boorman's black-and-white beauty about Irish gangster Martin Cahill; Steven Spielberg and Terrence Malick measure the costs of war in *Saving Private Ryan* and *The Thin Red Line*; Warren Beatty raps his way to liberation in *Bulworth*; Paul Schrader adapts Russell Banks with tact and sensitivity in *Affliction*.

Best Foreign-Language Picture: Ecstatic, brutal, weird, and gorgeous, Japanese director Takeshi Kitano's *Fireworks* explores the strange mind of a detective who brings equal zest and method to taking out mobsters and caring for his terminally ill wife.

Runners-up: Danish director Thomas Vinterberg takes a hand-held camera to a riotously dysfunctional family in *The Celebration*; Bruno Dumont gets inside the head of a young French racist in *The Life of Jesus*; in Abbas Kiarostami's *Taste of Cherry* a man drives across Iran to find an accomplice in his own suicide.

Best Documentary: Jonathan Stack and Liz Garbus's *The Farm*, an urgent, heartfelt examination of life in a Louisiana penitentiary.

Runners-up: Bennett

Miller's whimsical *The Cruise*, a one-man study of a logorrheic Manhattan street poet; Danielle Gardner's lively, touching *Soul in the Hole*, about inner-city basketball players; Dariusz Jablonski's *The Photographer*, a reconstruction of daily life in the Lodz ghetto during the Second World War, using photographs taken by the ghetto's Nazi accountant.

Best Actress: Emily Watson and Rachel Griffiths, for their symbiotic passion as the cellist Jacqueline Du Pré and her less-gifted sister in *Hilary and Jackie*.

Runners-Up: Cate Blanchett, as the mercurial,

politically savvy monarch in *Elizabeth*; Dominique Swain, for her grown-up turn as precocious child-woman in *Lolita*; Meryl Streep, as the prissy eldest sister of an Irish matriarchy in *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

Best Actor: Brendan Gleeson, for the elastic range of his performance as the charismatic Irish gangster in *The General*.

The Truman Show's
Laura Linney



Runners-up: Ian McKellen, wry, anguished, and lyrical as the gay film director James Whale in *Gods and Monsters*; John Hurt, likewise as the gay writer in *Love and Death on Long Island*; Nick Nolte, full of bluster and pain as the self-destructive cop in *Affliction*; Denis Leary, as the Boston-Irish thug in *Monument Ave*.

Best Supporting Actress: Laura Linney, for her hilariously over-the-top Nurse Ratched takeoff as Jim Carrey's wife in *The Truman Show*.

Runners-up: Kathy Bates, for her funny, affecting turn in the Betsey Wright/Vince Foster role in *Primary Colors*; Joan Allen, as the '50s mother who serves cholesterol breakfasts from hell in *Pleasantville*; Lisa Kudrow, for her acidic delivery as the ultimately endearing spinster in *The Opposite of Sex*; Kimberly Elise, for her quiet dignity as Oprah Winfrey's surviving daughter in *Beloved*.

Best Supporting Actor: Bill Murray, for his hangdog gravity and wild unreason, as the tycoon defeated by life in Wes Anderson's *Rushmore*.

Runners-up: Billy Bob Thornton, as a simpleton who belatedly grows a conscience in *A Simple Plan*; Jon Voight, for his restrained grace as a dogged detective in *The General*; Philip Seymour Hoffman, as the nerdy crank caller in *Happiness*; Chris Eigeman, as the unctuous club manager in *The Last Days of Disco*.

GRACE NOTES

LOVE: Danny DeVito puts the moves on Holly Hunter in *Living Out Loud*, fails, but shows her there is a life to be lived outside the resentful voices in her head.

WAR: In *The Thin Red Line* an American grunt, after plucking gold teeth from the mouths of dying Japanese soldiers on a battlefield, gets the shakes and throws the teeth away.

BEAUTY: Brendan Fraser, as a gardener befriended by film director James Whale (Ian McKellen), honors his

dead friend at the end of *Gods and Monsters* by walking the monster walk.

CHASTITY: Cate Blanchett's Queen puts on a chalky face and retroactively claims her virginity in *Elizabeth*: "Behold, Lord Burghley, I am married to England."

READY FOR HER CLOSE-UP: A très pink poodle in *Babe: Pig in the City* grieves for her glamorous past. "This recalls the glory days, when I was dizzy with privilege."

Ella Taylor is a film critic for LA Weekly.



The Butcher Boy



Rushmore's Murray



Gods and Monsters



Pretty in pink

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY GREG COUCH

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Dance and Theater

BY NANCY DALVA AND JOHN ISTEL

TAYLOR MADE FOR SPRING

That perfect harbinger of spring, the Paul Taylor Dance Company, swoops into New York's City Center this month (March 2-14; 212-581-1212), and then moves on to a tour of California (Santa Rosa, March 27; Acadia, April 3; San Francisco, April 7-18; Santa Cruz, April 20; Escondido, April 22; Glendale, April 24-25). To Manhattan, Taylor brings a couple of new works and a compelling list of revivals that includes the 1976 *Cloven Kingdom*. This quirky, dark-minded romp boasts a peerless men's

Paul Taylor's *Roses*

section—leaping, incredibly handsome guys wearing tuxedos, and holding their hands like rabbit paws. The entire divinely memorable dance is deeply rooted in the contradictions that make up human nature. Another revival, the 1985 *Roses*, represents the choreographer at his most romantic and his most classical. Taylor

being Taylor, he manages both modes at the same time, creating an Elysian playground where lovers meet in a series of ravishing duets. There is no dance more beautiful than this one anywhere, with the exception of Balanchine's shimmering *Liebeslieder Waltzer*. *Roses* shimmers too, yet is infinitely more playful. (One viewer has called it, with a nod to the Wagner score, "Prom Night at Valhalla.") Also on the revival slate is Taylor's *Nightshade*, a Gothic nightmare of transcendent loopiness. The pleasure in seeing these older pieces highlights one of the great ironies of creative art: long after the artist has moved on to something else, the audience seeks out, again and again, what it knows and loves. With literature the book resides on the shelf, waiting to be read. With paintings it is much the same. But with dance the only way we get to see old works is in seasons like the Taylor Company's, when the choreographer indulges us with another look at the beloved. Even then the revisit has its perils: Will the current cast live up to the cast we first saw? Is the dance all that we remember? With Paul Taylor the answers are always yes and yes. Don't miss it. —N.D.

SHARPSHOOTERS

Except for their obsession with pistols, the stage characters Hedda Gabler and Annie Oakley don't have a lot in common. This month, however, each character strides onstage in a high-caliber revival: Annette Bening shoots for Hedda in Ibsen's classic at the Geffen Playhouse, in Los Angeles; Bernadette Peters plays the eponymous sharpshooter in Irving Berlin's *Annie Get Your Gun*, which opens at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and then goes to Broadway. Bening hasn't been onstage since her heralded New York debut, more than ten years ago, in *Coastal Disturbances*—she's been too busy getting good film notices (*The Seige*, *The Grifters*) and raising her children with her husband, Warren Beatty. The Geffen's creative team promises to make her return a memorable one: Dan Sullivan (*The Heidi Chronicles*) directs



Hedda Gabler in a new adaptation by the acclaimed playwright Jon Robin Baitz. In some ways Peters has the more difficult task: she confronts the memory of Ethel Merman, who originated the role of Annie in 1946. Luckily, like Bening, Peters gets strong artistic backup: Peter Stone (*Titanic*, 1976) has rewritten Herb and Dorothy Fields's outmoded libretto, deepening the character for



Bernadette Peters (top) and Annette Bening

Peters while ditching the lines originally written expressly for La Merm. Although both projects insist that, indeed, you can't get a man with a gun, they do suggest that with top-of-the-line talent and a willingness to rewrite, you can produce a show as close to a sure shot as show business knows. —J.I.

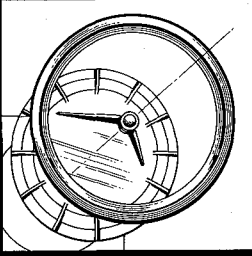
DEEP FREEZE

From the raunchy joke that gives the play its title—and ultimately its tragedy—to its four-and-a-half-hour length, *The Iceman Cometh* serves as Eugene O'Neill's most audacious work. Taking place in a single night in a seedy Bowery bar in 1912, the play centers on Hickey, a salesman for whom the denizens of Harry Hope's bar rapturously wait. As they slurp and sleep, lulled by the opiate of their own "pipe dreams," O'Neill goes for broke. Who else would dare to combine the overt symbolism of characters named Harry Hope and Jimmy Tomorrow with bouts of hyper-reality that make Gorky's *Lower Depths* look like a nineteenth-century tea room, and then top it off with an intoxicating deluge of language, culminating in Hickey's final fifteen-minute confessional

Kevin Spacey in *The Iceman Cometh*

monologue? José Quintero's first production, in 1956 at Circle in the Square, ten years after *Iceman's* debut, fueled the off-Broadway movement, and ran for more than 500 performances—the most of any O'Neill play. Its action in inaction predicted *Waiting for Godot*; its skewering of American optimism suggested *Death of a Salesman*; and its jokey morbidity prepared the way for the onslaught of irony and the theater of the absurd. After Quintero stunningly remounted this dramaturgical Everest in the early 1980s, with the premier O'Neill interpreter Jason Robards as Hickey, few would have expected to see another first-class production in their lifetime. Starting March 29 one of America's finest stage actors, Kevin Spacey, appears as Hickey in the award-winning British production directed by Howard Davies (Brooks Atkinson Theatre; Tickets 212-307-4100). Don't miss this chance to visit Harry's saloon. —J.I.

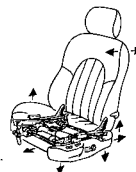
Nancy Dalva's essays appear in the magazine twice. John Istel is the editor-in-chief of Stagebill.



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And the rest of the**



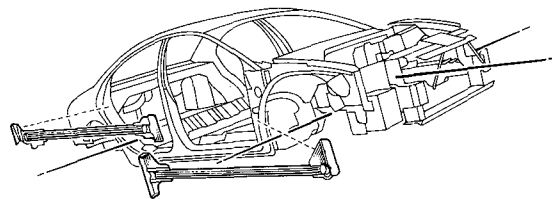
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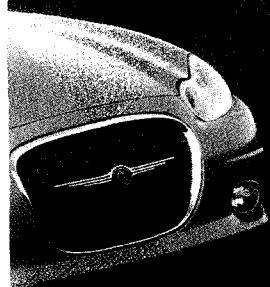
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Popular Music and Jazz

BY BOB BLUMENTHAL AND CHARLES M. YOUNG

MIXED METAL

In classical music and jazz, musicians establish a theme and then feel obligated to play a variation on it every time around. In rock-and-roll, musicians find a riff they like and play it exactly the same way for as long as they feel like it. In metal, musicians find a riff they like and play it twice as long as anyone else feels like it. In industrial, musicians have their computers play the riff until next Tuesday. Vietnam Inc., a band from Manchester, England, has aptly titled its debut album *Full Metal Racket* (Mercury). Indeed, it is full, it is metal, and what a racket. If these musicians had gone for full disclosure, as opposed to Stanley Kubrick allusions, they might also have added the terms "techno" and "industrial" to the title. Like their label brethren Rammstein, for whom Viet-



Vietnam Inc.

nam Inc. has done remixes, they are both relentless and precise, both terrifying and exhilarating, and their computers hammer away at their riffs until next Tuesday. They're really good riffs, though, enhanced considerably if you crank your stereo to neighbors-call-the-police volume, pound nails in your head, and watch C-Span. It's hard to tell what Vietnam Inc. is for or against just by listening to the lyrics, but its members seem to have especially intense feelings about "obsessional love" and how it distorts the personality while bestowing a large percentage of the adrenaline that fuels this music. They express distaste for fundamentalists in "Born Again." In "We Love You" they taunt the audience, a cathartic ritual held over from their punk beginnings, but if you happen to have punk roots yourself, there's nothing better than getting properly taunted. Watch for their tour and get properly taunted in person. —C.M.Y.

Bob Blumenthal is a jazz critic for The Boston Globe. Charles M. Young reviews popular music for Playboy, Musician, and other publications.



The Damns TX

The Damns TX have made quite a stir in Austin with their live show and one locally released album. Now the rest of the country can hear why on *Half Mad Moon* (Watermelon/Sire), their major-label debut. Bright

country rock with respect for the proper traditions, the album varies widely in mood from track to track, yet retains a satisfying continuity. Actually, the most satisfying thing here is the band's bracing energy, which is presented in a very pure and concise instrumental environ-

ment. No hiding behind walls of guitar wash from big amplifiers. Indeed, one of the best songs, "Black Widow," tells the story of the Damns' favorite amplifier getting stolen—a moment of exquisite despair in the life of all too many musicians, but rarely documented. Led by a pair of half-sisters, Amy Boone and Deborah Kelly, The Damns TX harmonize gloriously as they document their sense of loss, and not just of stolen equipment. The opening song, "Things I Once Adored," tells the story of lost love leading to lost everything else, and "No Sign of Water" uses some bleak imagery of the Old West to speculate on the harsh meaning of it all. If harmonies aren't for making the harsh meaning of it all a little more tolerable, what are they for? —C.M.Y.

SWING SHIFT

Commercial touches on jazz albums usually produce either the blandness of soporific smooth jazz or the arena-rock assaults of overamplified fusion. Donald Harrison has a different idea of how to plough populist ground with his alto saxophone. He calls his concept *Nouveau Swing*, which places his fluent, often acerbic horn in an atmosphere of contemporary dance beats. *Free to Be* (Impulse!), Harrison's second effort in the style, is an infectious program on which salsa, second-line, hip-hop, reggae, and swing are blended into rhythmic stews that allow the saxophonist to dart and slide without in any way diminishing the cleverness or lyrical content of his ideas. The foundation might be funk on his cover of the Meters' hit "Cissy Strut," or in the more reflective

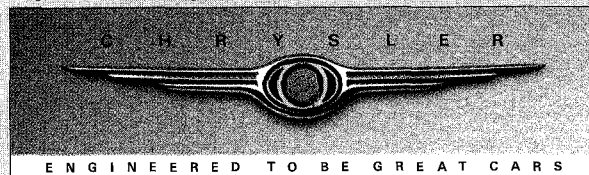


Donald Harrison

atmosphere of "Smooth Sailing," though Harrison ultimately layers the rhythmic activity to create new conjunctions of source grooves. He is better prepared to practice this style than most, having grown up in New Orleans and apprenticed with the jazz master Art Blakey and the Latin-music giant Eddie Palmieri. Star sidemen, including Palmieri, lend frisky support on a few tracks; most of the album is energized by Harrison's own young and promising band, featuring Andrew Adair on piano, Reuben Rogers on bass, and John Lamkin on drums. They've all absorbed the obvious yet rarely practiced notion at the heart of *Nouveau Swing*—that just as improvisers ought to learn song lyrics, as the tenor saxophonist Lester Young advised, a player who wants to make listeners move should know the dance steps. —B.B.

In March tune in to TNT for *Space Jam*, the 1996 blockbuster sports comedy starring Michael Jordan, Bugs Bunny, and the Looney Tunes gang (March 14, 9:00 P.M. EST). Root for Bugs's team as it plays a winner-take-all game of basketball against a villainous gang of "Monstars" who have captured the talents of some NBA superstars.

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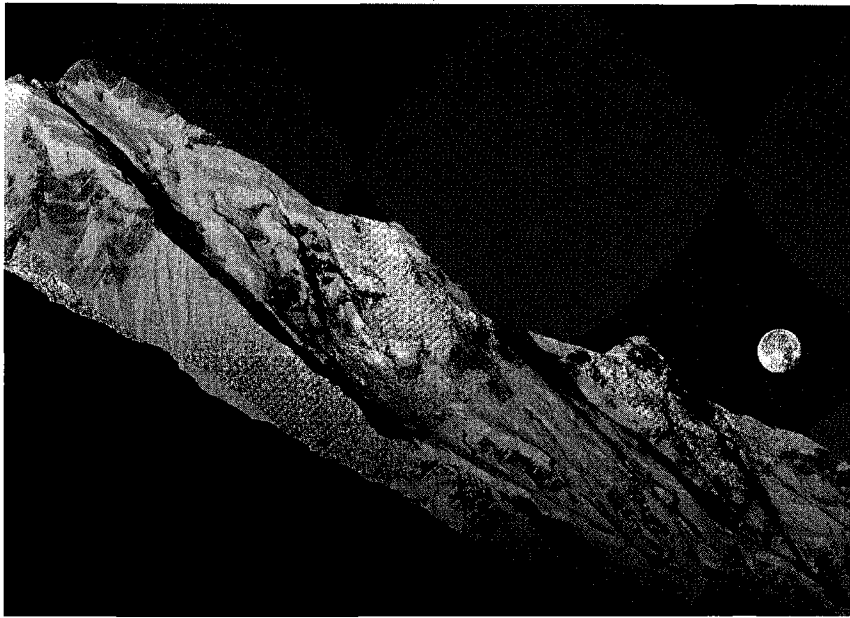
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GALEN KOWELL

On Top of the World

*Days of adventure and moments
of transcendence along the
Karakoram Highway*

BEYOND the mud-and-stone houses of the Chinese town of Tashkurghan (altitude 12,136 feet) the grassy plateau and granite-hued mountains climb into the sky. Though majestic, this view is just a preamble to the geography in Pakistan, eighty miles to the south; there the Karakoram, the Pamir, the Himalaya, and the Hindu Kush Mountains abut. Amid

this jumble of ranges some thirty peaks top 22,000 feet, and even most of these are dwarfed by Rakaposhi, at 25,551 feet; Nanga Parbat, at 26,660; and K2, at 28,250, the highest mountain on earth after Everest.

Incredibly, the Chinese and the Pakistanis have blasted a road—the Karakoram Highway—through this territory, a feat of engineering that took twenty years and cost hundreds of lives. Inaugurated in 1982 (but not fully opened to foreigners until four years later), the

highway follows the most treacherous parts of the old Silk Road, and might more accurately be described as an 800-mile track of dirt, broken asphalt, and unstable macadam. It begins in the Chinese city of Kashgar, passes through Tashkurghan, and continues south into Pakistan over the Khunjerab Pass, which, at 15,514 feet, is said to be the highest border crossing in the world.

From there it winds its way down through mountains of pristine isolation and beauty, and ends in the hectic lowland cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Last spring I went to western China in order to travel the Karakoram Highway. The road from Kashgar to Tashkurghan was dusty and long, passing through dun-colored mountains whose desolation suggested the surface of the moon, but I knew that the best lay ahead, in Pakistan. I wanted to breathe the crystalline air there and gaze on cloud-laced

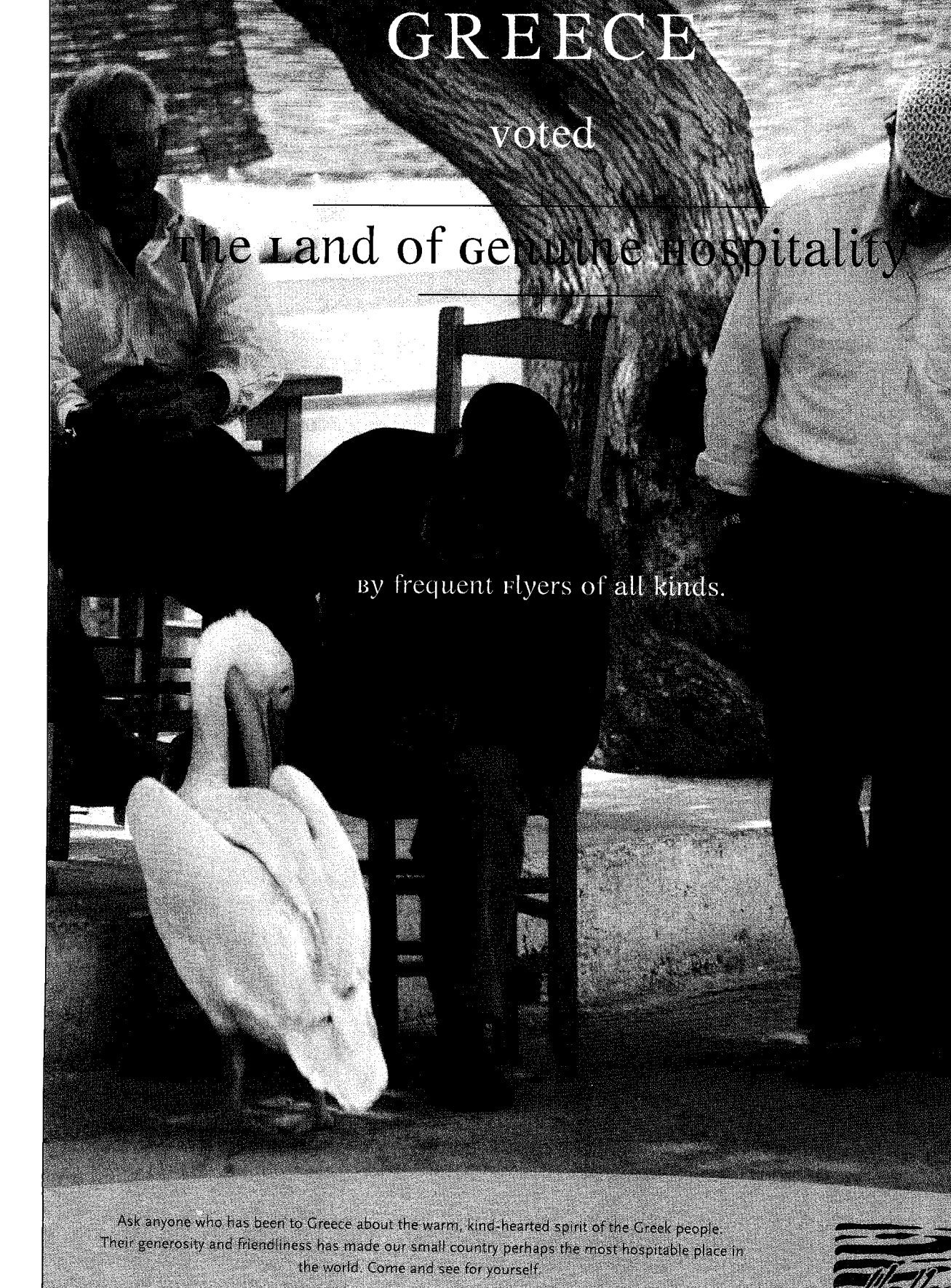
peaks, and I looked forward to meeting the Wakhi Tadjik inhabitants of the highway's northern reaches, who I'd been told are friendly and unjaded. The highway had other attractions as well, including rivers crashing down from glacial lees near the town of Passu, and the mist-shrouded glacier of Ultar. All in all, the Karakoram promised a combination of people and high-altitude scenery to take my breath away.

ON the morning of my departure from Tashkurghan dust twisters wandered up and down the valley, powdery snow blew across the drab earth, and the wind groaned over tinny Chinese pop songs piped onto the main street through loudspeakers on the lampposts. I was to leave on the daily bus for the Khunjerab Pass and the Pakistani town of Sust. I stood and talked, in English, with six or seven friendly traders from Lahore who were wearing oversize Reebok sneakers, Chicago Bulls caps, and regal white shalwar qamizes (their traditional knee-length shirts and baggy trousers) under down jackets. They fiddled with prayer beads and twirled Motorola beepers on chains—for use elsewhere. Tashkurghan has no pager service.

The China-Pakistan bus rattled up an hour late, looking like a tawny ghost of itself. It was covered with dust. The engine coughed through the tailpipe, the driver coughed into his hands, and we passengers began coughing as we boarded. Having suffered through a terrible dust storm on its way in from Kashgar, the bus had a half-inch-thick layer of sand on its floor. Its seats puffed dust, and its windows were an opaque brown.

After getting through Chinese passport control we roared out onto the main road and to a checkpoint. There an officer in crisp white gloves flagged us down and hopped aboard. He squinted hard at the Pakistanis and me, and then turned and waved at a nearby bunker. A squadron of People's Liberation Army recruits jogged out in formation. They were garbed in tidy camouflage uniforms and camouflage sneakers, and carried, among other things, bushels of cauli-

Mount Rakaposhi, Pakistan



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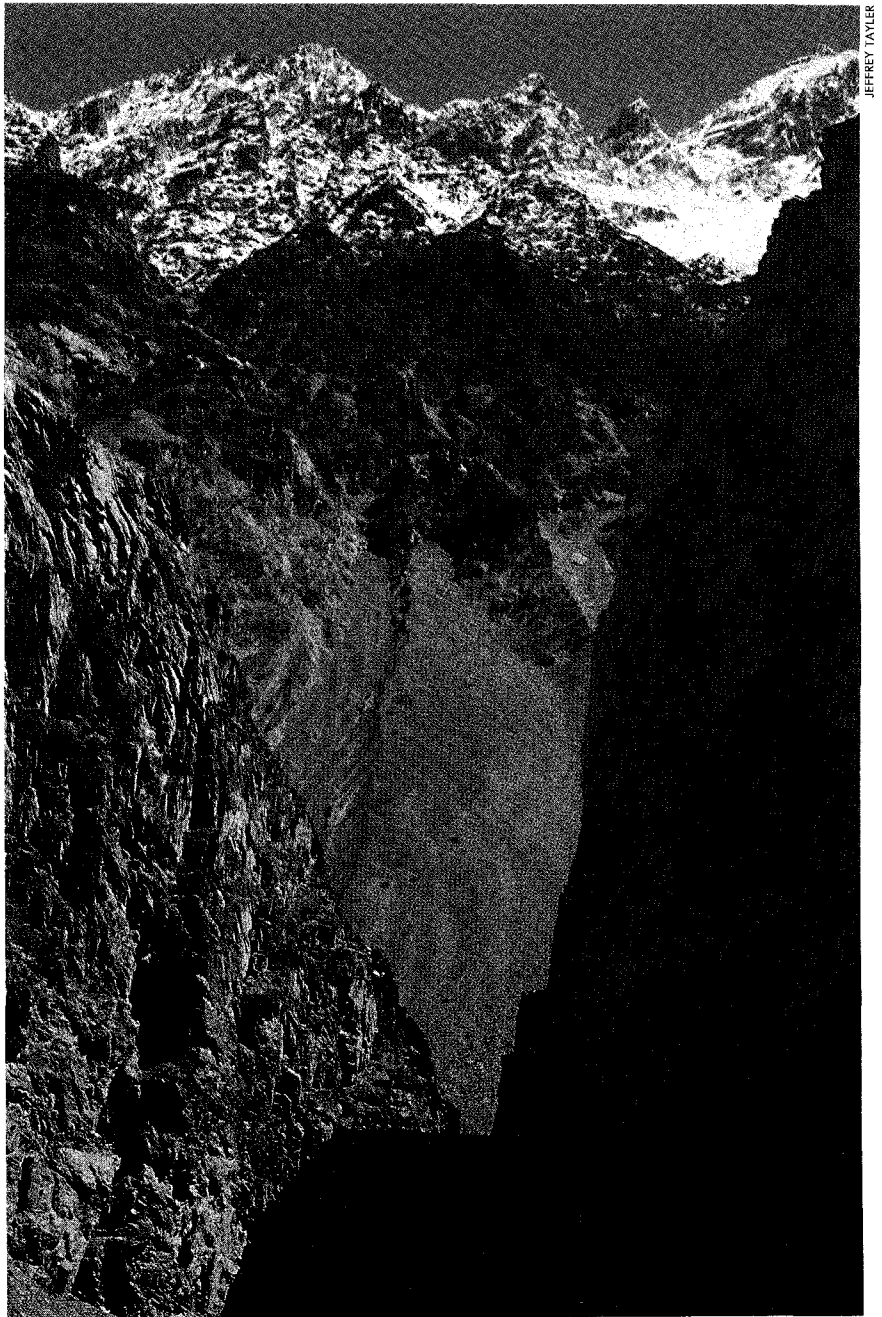
flower, bundles of garlic, sheaves of long-rooted onions, leaking sacks of flour, boxes stuffed with red peppers. They leaped aboard and marched down the aisle, onions and garlic and flour flying onto our heads as they passed. Once they had deposited their loads in the rear, they jogged back to the bunker for more. Within minutes half the bus was piled to the roof with produce, and I found myself sharing my seat with a sack of potatoes. The commander saw this and ordered the sack removed. He sat down next to me and, smiling, companionably placed his hand on my knee. Smiling, I companionably removed it.

We lurched ahead, puffing dust and shedding flour, along the Karakoram Highway, two-lane asphalt here, and headed up the rising plateau toward the clouds. Chunky Himalayan marmots, resembling giant golden woodchucks, bounded away as we approached; eagles dropped into our slipstream. Tadzhik adobe villages, low to the ground, marked the farthest reaches of the valley. Red-scarved shepherdesses, their cheeks sun-bronzed, their noses aquiline, stood impassive beside the road; behind them, to the north, rose the rounded, snowy Pamirs.

Two hours later we came upon a trailer marked, in English, FRONTIER DEFENSE OF CHINA. The driver halted, the soldiers made off with their foodstuffs, and we were few again.

For two more hours we trundled upward into thinning air. Passing yaks and their yaklets, we entered the clouds, our engine straining, overheating, and eventually belching steam through the access hatch next to the driver. When we hit the 15,000-foot point, I found myself gasping for breath; a giddy sense of unreality set in. The Pakistanis wrapped themselves in blankets against the cold and lowered their heads.

Finally we reached the Khunjerab Pass. A broad clearing of rock and grassy knoll spread west, populated by ibex and more yaks, by drifting clouds and wandering shafts of sunlight. Elsewhere snow-covered mountains sloped up. We dawdled in their shadow. I felt as if I were on a roller coaster at the very top of its tracks, lolling on the brink, facing the whiplash descent. We rolled forward toward a yawning ravine of black rock and snow, as vistas of clear sky, crags, and



JEFFREY TAYLER

The Karakoram Highway: a feat of high-altitude engineering

glacier unfurled. Soon after we crossed over into the left lane (in Pakistan one drives on the left), the road dipped and we lurched into descent, swinging left, veering right, careening down switchback after switchback, honking and driving yaks from the road, scattering ibex on the cliffs, flying pell-mell around bends, the driver ripping open the hatch to check the steaming engine, slamming it shut as we swung near the edge, ever wrestling with his wheel. Rocks the size of coffins littered the road; we slowed and maneuvered around them. The driver, who had been scanning the mountain walls above, jammed on the brakes and

we skidded sideways. "Movement!" he shouted, looking up.

Silence prevailed, and then the roar of a river at the ravine's bottom began to filter up to us. Soon, however, we heard what sounded like another river—overhead. Hundreds of feet above, a dust cloud danced on the slopes—but it was not a dust cloud. Baseball-sized stones were tumbling downward, loosening basketball-sized rocks in their path. A hurly-burly of stone was in motion—a minor avalanche that could become major. Then it swept behind a ridge and disappeared; we never saw it end or learned its fate. I later learned that two months

earlier a landslide on the road just ahead of this spot had buried three trucks and killed two Chinese drivers.

"The rocks they are falling down now, sir, oh yes!" the Pakistani across the aisle said to me.

After a ten-minute wait we went on, soon accelerating to our previous daredevil pace. We sailed down through sweeps of stratified rock. One wall would catch the sun off another, glowing opalescent green and amber, and pass the reflection on down to the next stratum, in a relay race of light and luminosity attended by our engine's echoes and by occasional thunderlike rumbling from adjacent chasms.

Toward evening we reached Sust (altitude 10,160 feet).

AFTER the dust, crowds, and endless noodles of China, northern Pakistan was salve for the soul and the palate—a land of solitude, of clean air and lapis lazuli sky, of hearty food. Fortified by a meal of chapati (unleavened bread), curried chicken, and fried potatoes, I hiked up the mountainside that evening, before the sun sank beneath the peaks, to the Wakhi Tadjhik hamlet of Nazimabad. Two brothers in their early teens, Tariq and Aziz, followed me, eager to show me their environs. "These are my apples, sir; these are my tomatoes, sir," Tariq said proudly, indicating two of many plots. Others, some no larger than prayer mats, had been seeded with wheat, planted with miniature fruit trees, dug into grids and sown with potatoes. The houses were of stone and surrounded by mowed grass intercut with impeccably clean walkways. Out of Islamic modesty, the women in the tiny fields averted their eyes as I passed, but they did so cheerfully, saying "Salaam," barely able to hide their smiles. The Wakhis and other reclusive Muslim tribes in northern Pakistan began regularly seeing foreigners only in 1986, when the northern part of the highway opened to outsiders; the townspeople of Sust could hardly conceal their delight at encountering a person like me.

Parting with the brothers, I decided to continue up the stone path past the village. The sun was falling fast, setting aflame peaks in the east, and the pale green of the valley floor was deepening to dark emerald. Eagles cried out as they soared across the chasms to their crags. I

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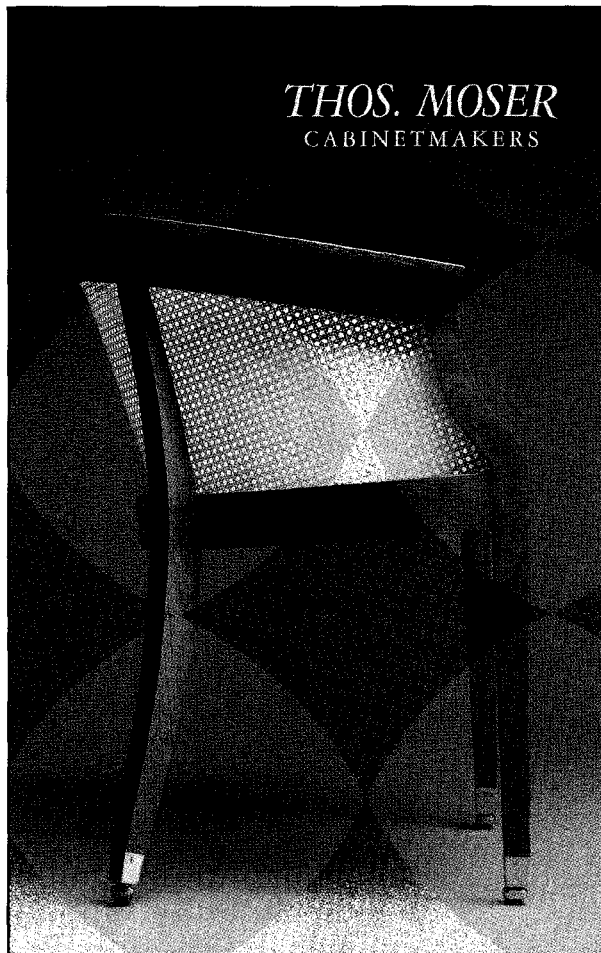
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JEFFREY TAYLER

Near the Khunjerab Pass

reached the lookout point, which was still far beneath the peaks: in Nazimabad, far below, women were moving splashes of red and gold, men were swatches of somber brown. Floating up to me, even here, was the soft, rushing lullaby of the Hunza River, at the foot of the mountains opposite.

But I was not to linger; I wanted to move on to hiking terrain, and Sust offered fewer possibilities than the land to the south. The next morning I caught the bus down to the town of Passu. Two days later I found myself on an excursion, swinging above the green torrents of the Hunza south of Passu, breathing the piercing blue, feeling the razor cut of cold, thin air in my lungs. My hands gripped the cables of a suspension bridge 150 yards long; my feet edged from plank to loose plank. If I craned my neck upward, I saw sky. On every side rose panoramas of red and brown rock; ahead on the slope, beneath the snows, lay the hamlet of Hussaini.

Ali, a Wakhi Tadjik in beige robes, watched as I moved tediously across the bridge he had sprinted over minutes before. When I made it to the bank, he told me that a month earlier strong winds had swept two children from the bridge. They fell fifty feet into the water—and lived. “They knew how to swim,” Ali said with a shrug, as if such a fall and surviving it were everyday occurrences here. He made his living farming a plot of potatoes and apricots that was accessible only by the bridge, which he had crossed several times a day for most of his forty-four years.

Ali’s house, in Hussaini, was typical of the region: one capacious, carpeted stone chamber served for living, eating, and sleeping; a wood stove provided heat;

and outside was an immaculate courtyard. A stone wall surrounded everything and furnished a sense of sanctuary. His wife brought us spiced potatoes in a clay pot, and it seemed to me that the pottery enriched the flavor and enhanced the aroma. We dug in, using warm chapati instead of flatware to handle the food.

His occupation notwithstanding, Ali is no simple peasant: he studied engineering in Karachi and spent months in Europe years ago; his English and sophistication reflect all this. He had seen Karachi, lived in its squalor, and decided he’d had enough—and so he’d returned to the tranquillity of his native north. Still, he seemed not quite at home in Hussaini. His education sets him apart from his fellow villagers, who rarely journey farther than Gilgit, seventy miles down the highway. He asked me if I liked Heineken beer; we talked about life in Europe; he wanted to know about Boris Yeltsin’s health and the role of the mafia in Moscow, where I live; he expressed an articulate interest in the world. Later Ali saw me to the trail leading back to Passu. Parting from him, I felt nourished, relaxed, and optimistic about the world.

The next day I hired a jeep to take me the forty miles to Karimabad, whose idyl-

lic apricot orchards, robust inhabitants, and unspoiled meadows have earned the surrounding Hunza Valley regard as the most beautiful section of the highway.

JAVED, my Hunzakut guide, hopped from rock to rock up the irrigation channel bringing glacier water down from the mountain. With sweat pouring from every pore, I tried to match his pace but could not. Instead I discovered the concert of my lungs, a symphony of whistling bronchi over which I had lost control. We were only at 7,500 feet, but our ascent toward the glacier by the meadow of Ultar Nala, beneath Ultar peak, was as steep as was climbable without the use of gear. Beneath us spread the village of Karimabad; across the Hunza Valley rose Mount Rakaposhi, trailed by a plume of blowing snow. Thinking of nothing more than sweat, thinning air, and the need to maintain my balance on the rocks, I almost forgot why I had set out on the hike: to see the glacier and drink in the view of the valley.

An hour and a half later we were treading gingerly along the foot-wide stones laid as a walkway beside the irrigation channel. On our right a sheer drop of 2,000 feet ended in a crashing glacial stream. Thunder rumbled, and I scanned the sky, but it was clear. Responding to my puzzled look, Javed said that this was the wrong time of year to make the hike. I mentioned sudden storms. “No, no storms now,” he answered. I lost my balance and caught it again, feeling fear



JEFFREY TAYLER

Miniature agricultural plots in the hamlet of Nazimabad

The day we found a monster in our mailroom

This happened in Tokyo. A Japanese mother returned a kid's parka to us. And somebody in Shipping discovered a toy in the pocket – a goofy, 4-inch monster.

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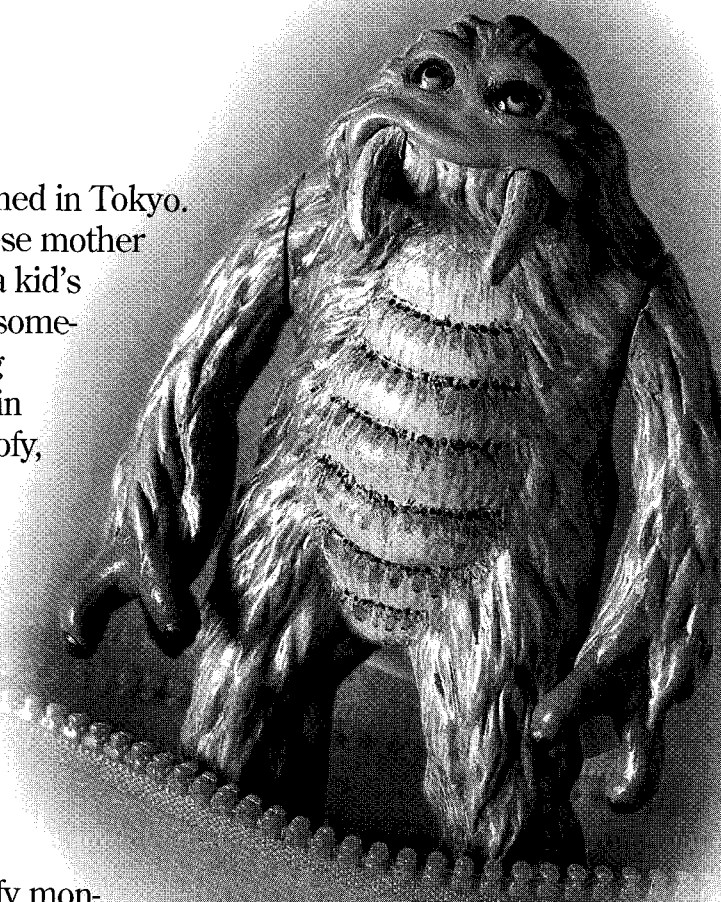
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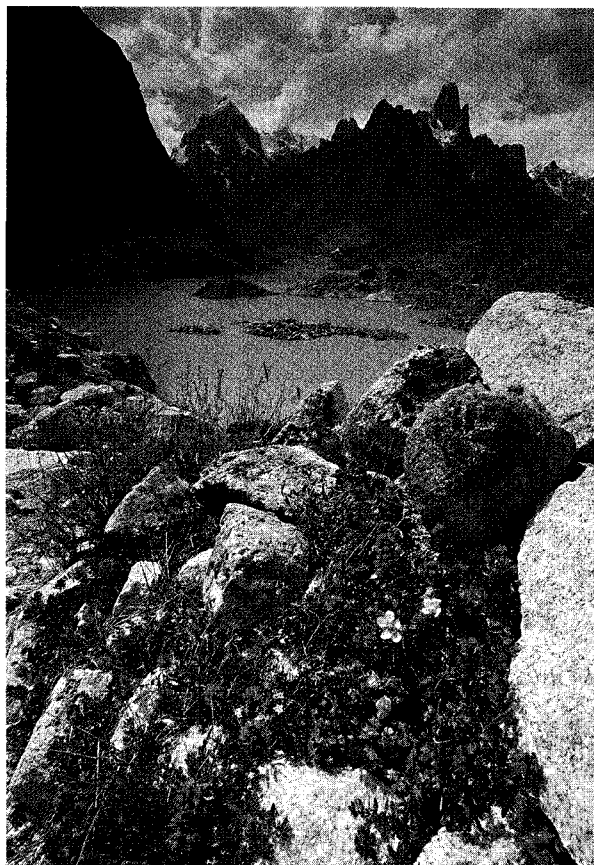
prick the soles of my feet. I stopped thinking about the sky and focused on avoiding a ruinous topple over the edge.

We left the channel and reached a scree covered with a strange silvery dust, and ascended it by hand and foot, raising puffs of silver with every move. Then the irrigation channel reappeared, snaking along a concave granite façade, and once again we set out along its ledge. We had to crawl where it cut deep into the mountain-side. As I negotiated a particularly parlous, crumbling stretch, Javed told me that a few weeks earlier some Japanese hikers had fallen from here—the channel wall had given way—and broken their backs.

After alighting on solid ground and scrambling up a goat trail to a clearing, I saw no glacier, nor was there a sign of one. Where were we headed? Javed pointed upward again. More thunder resounded from on high. We kept going. Farther on, water cascaded off a cliff in a scintillating rainbow shower; I turned my face toward it and imbibed. It was sweet and pure, and I felt dizzily refreshed. Soon the mingled scents of wild mint and sheep pellets suggested that we were arriving at a meadow. We came upon another small clearing, under rock faces glowing amber and jade-green with reflected sunlight—beautiful, but not the meadow of Ultar Nala. Above us loomed the immense Ultar peak, but where? Javed pointed skyward, but I could discern nothing amid the mists except the charcoal-black lesser pinnacle of Bubulimating. Were the glacier and the Ultar peak mountain spirits I was unworthy to see?

Soon after, we met Hunzakut shepherds who resembled puckish sprites, with their smiling blue eyes and their rolled wool caps adorned with violets. They ambled cheerfully down the trail, leading their flocks, laughing and calling out greetings to us.

At noon, three and a half hours after leaving Karimabad, we arrived at the meadow. Velvety grass cut to a low shag by grazing sheep spread above a gray moraine. Still higher, the snowy, frozen



"I wanted to breathe the crystalline air..."

torrent of Ultar glacier ran down an inaccessible defile, becoming gritty in its lower reaches and, by the time it touched the moraine, turning into what resembled a floe of solidified black lava. Stone huts stood lonely in the farthest corners of the meadow; just ahead of us were a tent and a ring of stone benches covered with cushions of grass turf. Ancient shepherds resting on rocks nodded greetings to us; one got up and offered to make us a meal of potatoes, a chopped vegetable dish that the Pakistanis call ladyfingers, and rice for a couple of dollars. We accepted. Again there was thunder.

"Why do we hear so much thunder up here?" I asked Javed.

He looked up. "That's not thunder but an avalanche. Spring is avalanche time. The snow melts, rocks loosen and slip, but because of the clouds and fog you cannot see this from down here. But the avalanches are real: two Japanese climbers trying to climb Ultar peak were killed in one above here, and their graves are just beyond the meadow."

More thunder followed. Now I felt Ultar peak to be frighteningly close, sinister, hiding itself behind cloaks of fog, angry at our proximity. Until 1991,

when it was finally scaled, it was among the highest unclimbed mountains in the world. I set out to visit the climbers' graves, but in an hour of rambling up and down the meadow I could not find them.

As we were preparing to start the hike back to Karimabad, an especially loud roar resounded from above. Javed, the shepherds, and I all turned our heads toward Ultar glacier: from its fog-shrouded heights came a slow-motion tidal wave of snow and black rock, which broke over ramparts of ice and lashed at the stone walls. It crashed over the ledge beyond the moraine and tumbled onto the gritty ice below. Then there was silence. Clouds closed like curtains over the mouth of the defile.

Back in Karimabad that evening, I sat at a rooftop restaurant and devoured a traditional Hunza meal of beef baked in embers and wrapped

in chapati, and boiled potatoes served with apricot shavings. Sated and refreshed, I reclined in my seat and raised my eyes to Rakaposhi. Its summit, a heavenly anvil of black rock and eternal ice, was now wreathed with clouds that absorbed the pale-orange hues of the setting sun. I surrendered myself to the spectacle: Rakaposhi drew me toward the empyrean; it lured me out of myself and into communion with something akin to the divine.

AFTER I left the Hunza Valley, the divine slipped away, the temporal edged in again, and the highway lost its charm. Jaglot and Komila, impoverished roadside settlements to the south, hurried me out of the cool Karakoram, into the warm hills, and then down onto the flatlands of the Punjab—flatlands of feverish bustle. I found myself sweating in the cities of the plain, with images of the Khunjerab Pass, tranquil Sust, and the peaks along the highway fading from my inner eye. But one memory remained clear, lifting me out of the clamor and the heat: Rakaposhi, soaring and snow-plumed, a lodestar of the heavenly on earth, a profferer of peace. ☸

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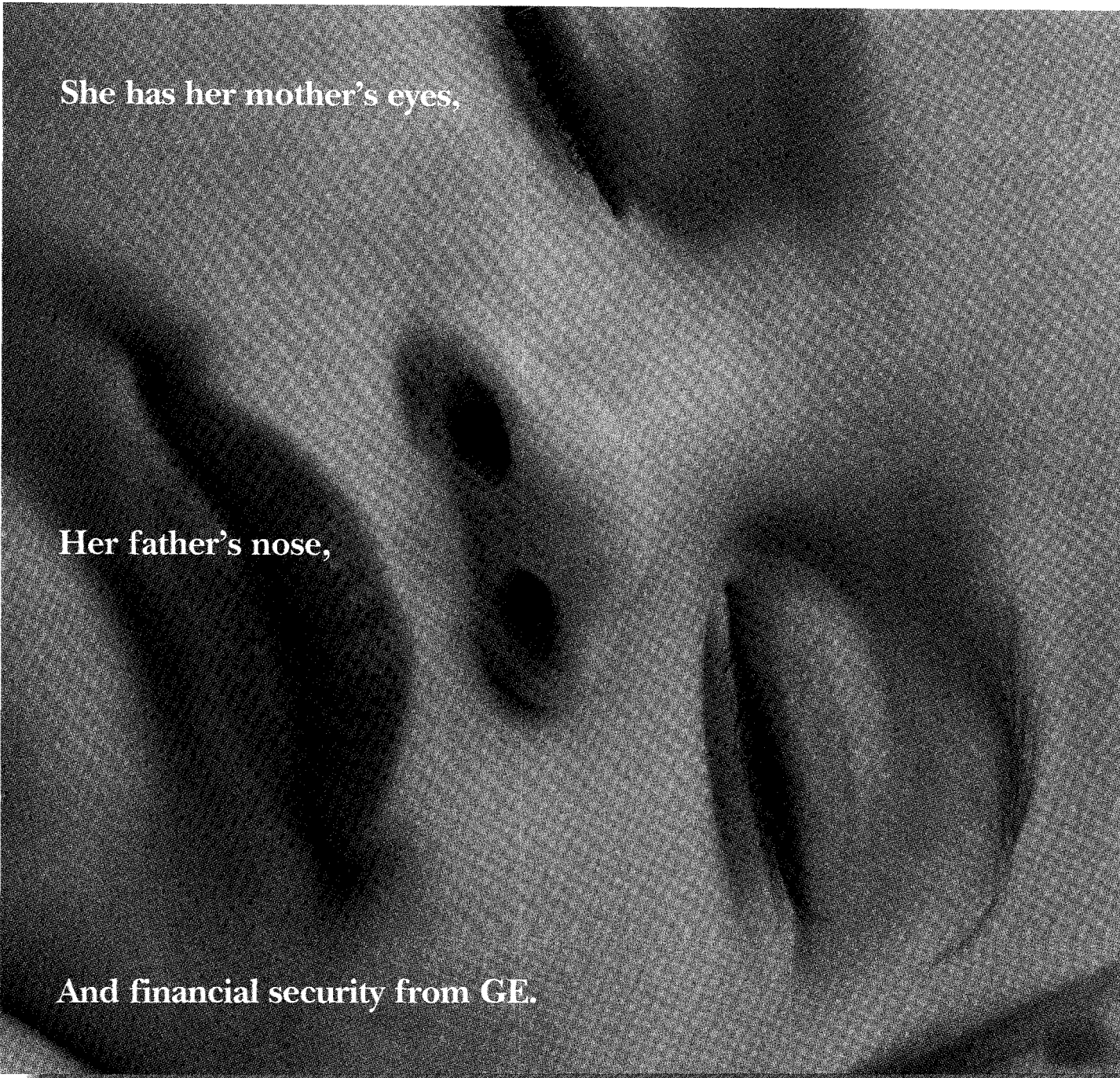
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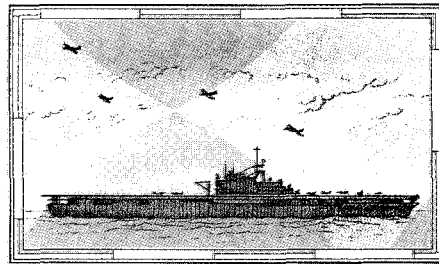
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VICTORY AT SEA

by DAVID M. KENNEDY

Recent movies like Saving Private Ryan and The Thin Red Line have vividly depicted the face of land battle in the Second World War, but the story of the American war is incomplete without the sweep and strategic stakes of the war at sea, in which 104,985 American sailors and Marines were wounded, 56,683 were killed, and more than 500 U.S. naval vessels were sunk. Lest we forget



MILITARY necessity is a profligate breeder of inventions. The Second World War incubated revolutionary innovations in all spheres of warfare: tanks transformed land battle; strategic bombers opened new fighting frontiers in the air; submarines and aircraft carriers rendered obsolete centuries of doctrine about waging war at sea. By war's end these vaulting leaps in military technology had swept all the combatants, including the United States, across older moral frontiers as well.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, on December 7, 1941, dramatically heralded the new age of naval combat. Aircraft launched from half a dozen Japanese carriers, operating thousands of miles from home, made quick work of crippling the eight aging U.S. battleships anchored helplessly below them. Though it would take some time to become apparent, Pearl Harbor ended the era of the dreadnoughts. In a few minutes of a Hawaiian Sunday morning a few hundred Japanese pilots enormously widened the arc of naval war, and transformed its very nature. Future sea battles would be fought over distances once unimaginable, and by sailors who never laid eyes on an enemy ship.

Japan would in time pay a horrific price for its moment of victory at Pearl Harbor, but the attack was hardly a gesture of suicidal folly. It was a carefully calculated risk that held out the prospect of huge rewards. The potential gains seemed especially alluring in December of 1941. Hitler's conquest of France and the Netherlands in the preceding year and the Battle of Britain had left the resource-rich European colonies in Southeast Asia and the Indonesian archipelago temptingly vulnerable. The Americans seemed more concerned with the disintegrating situation in Europe than with events in the Pacific, and appeared unlikely to muster either the resources or the will to fight a two-ocean war. When Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union, in June of 1941, distracted Japan's traditional rival for hegemony in East Asia, Japanese expansionists saw a historic opportunity. Now was the time to plunge into the paddies and rubber plantations of French Indochina and British Malaya, and the coveted oil fields of the Dutch East Indies. This "Southern Operation" would seal off China from outside help, thus underwriting victory in Japan's frustrating four-year war against Chiang Kai-shek's feckless but tenacious Chinese army. It would cast out the hated European and American colonizers once and for all, ending centuries of Western dominance in Asia. More immediately, seizing the Dutch East Indies oil fields would secure Japanese fuel supplies, nullifying the effect of the embargo that America had imposed in July, in a futile effort to restrain Japanese expansion into Southeast Asia.

At an imperial conference in the first week of September, 1941, Japanese officials resolved that if a reversal of the American embargo was not achieved through diplomatic means by early October, Japan should launch the Southern Operation. But as Japanese war games had repeatedly demonstrated, for the operation to be successful Japan must first knock out the British naval facility at Singapore, deny the Americans the use of the Philippines as a forward basing area, and venture far out into the Pacific to cripple the main elements of the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The plan was hugely ambitious but not mad. Its slender logic resided for the most part in the hope that the isolationist and militarily unprepared Americans would be so stunned by Japan's lightning blows that they would lose the will to fight

a protracted war, and would accept a negotiated settlement guaranteeing Japan a free hand in Asia. All the Japanese planners understood that a conventional victory, ending in the complete defeat of the United States, was an impossibility. Admiral Takijiro Onishi was one of the few voices warning that an attack on Pearl Harbor might make the Americans "so insanely mad" that all hope for compromise would go up in flames. Everyone knew that if the Americans should choose to fight a war to the finish, Japan was almost certainly doomed. The Emperor, a diminutive figure revered by his people as the son of God, a taciturn man who usually sat impassive during these ritualized conferences, appreciated the perils ahead. He sharply reminded his military leaders that China's extensive hinterland had cheated Japan of victory on the Asian mainland, and that the Pacific was "boundless." To that cryptic utterance there was no effective rejoinder. The plan was approved.

PEARL HARBOR

SO it was that in early December of 1941 Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander in chief of Japan's Combined Fleet, fretted in his headquarters aboard the battleship *Nagato* in Hiroshima Bay. He had directed a powerful task force under Vice-Admiral Chuichi Nagumo to sortie on November 26 from Hitokappu Bay, in the Kurile Islands, under orders to attack the U.S. Pacific Fleet base at Pearl Harbor. Yamamoto had provided that "in the event an agreement is reached in the negotiations with the United States, the Task Force will immediately return to Japan," but the negotiations had by now irretrievably collapsed. There would be no turning back.

Other Japanese naval forces were at the same time initiating the enormous Southern Operation, slicing southward from Japan to land invasion troops in the Philippines, Malaya, and the great oil-rich prize of the Dutch East Indies. The Pearl Harbor expedition was the pivot of this complex scheme, and surely the most perilous of the several daring military operations Japan now had under way.

So much could go wrong. The strike force, designated First Air Fleet, had been organized only eight months earlier, and had never fought a concerted action. The six aircraft carriers that composed its fighting core embodied the experimental concept of naval air power, long advocated by visionaries such as the American Billy Mitchell and the First Air Fleet's own air staff officer, Commander Minoru Genda, but still virtually untested in the unforgiving crucible of battle. The very length of the 4,000-mile attack route, well beyond the Japanese navy's traditional radius of action, necessitated tricky refueling at sea, and amplified the chances for detection.

Surprise would enormously enhance the prospects for success, just as surprise had favored Japan when it launched its other great war against a Caucasian power by besieging the

Russian fleet at Port Arthur in 1904. So Nagumo's ships ploughed methodically eastward from Hitokappu Bay in strict radio silence, enveloping themselves as well in the cloud and mist of an eastering weather front. Yamamoto could trace their putative movements on his charts, but would know nothing for certain until radio silence was broken.

Short, deep-chested, swift and sarcastic in argument, bold and ingenious in battle, born in 1884 in the great flowering of the Meiji Restoration, Yamamoto was at the summit of his distinguished naval career in 1941. He had firsthand knowledge of his adversary. He had studied English at Harvard in the 1920s, and later served as naval attaché in Washington, where he had earned a reputation as a shrewd poker player. He had also acquired a sober respect for the war-making po-

cow the isolationist Americans into acquiescing in Japan's dominance over China and the Pacific. At a minimum, knocking out the U.S. Pacific fleet would buy precious time for the Southern Operation to go forward unmolested, and for Japan so to consolidate its hold on Southeast Asia that it could not easily be dislodged.

Success at Pearl Harbor would vindicate the Japanese navy, so long denied a role in the land war in China, yet fiercely proud of the part it had played in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905—especially its legendary conquest of the Russian fleet at the Battle of Tsushima Strait, in 1905. For the Japanese people, and especially for seamen like Yamamoto, Tsushima represented not only a glorious naval victory but a confirmation and font of racial pride. Tsushima had demonstrated the vulnerability of the haughty Western powers in the face of Japan's rising industrial might and abiding moral superiority. Yamamoto himself had been blooded at Tsushima. His left hand, missing two fingers lost in that battle, daily reminded him of the near-mythic spell that Tsushima still cast for his service and his nation.

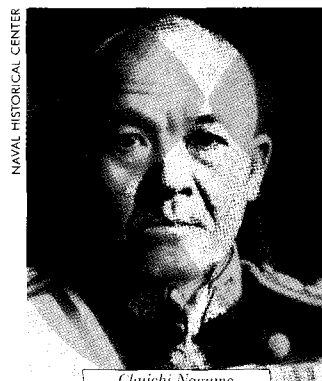
At sea on December 4, silent and undetected several hundred miles northwest of Hawaii, Vice-Admiral Nagumo's sprawling flotilla of nearly three dozen ships swung from its easterly course to a southeasterly bearing. On the morning of December 6 Nagumo completed his final refueling. His oilers angled away to take station at the rendezvous point for the return voyage. Freed of the lumbering tankers, at 11:30 Nagumo ordered speed increased to twenty knots and pointed his ships due south, carving a course that would bring them to the launching sector, 200 miles north of Oahu, just before dawn the next day. At 11:40 his flagship, the giant carrier *Akagi*, ran up the very "Z" flag that Admiral Togo had flown at the Battle of Tsushima Strait, thirty-six years before. Flushed with patriotic emotion, Japanese sailors and pilots cheered wildly.

With Togo's historic pennant snapping in the wind, Nagumo's arrowhead-shaped armada plunged through heavy seas, bearing relentlessly down on its target. Destroyers patrolled along its flanks, submarines guarded its rear, and an imposing cordon of battleships and cruisers closely jacketed the precious carriers with their lethal cargoes at the arrowhead's heart.

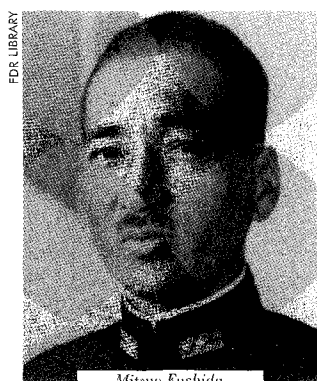
Just before 6:00 A.M. Nagumo wheeled due east again, to launch his planes into the wind. Pilots, wearing bandannas emblazoned with the word *Hissho* ("Certain Victory"), scrambled into their aircraft. Within minutes 183 planes had lifted from the decks of the six carriers and were shaping their triangular formations for the first attack wave. Fifty-one dive bombers made up the high squadron, with forty-nine level bombers below, and forty torpedo planes lower still. High overhead ranged forty-three Mitsubishi A6M fighters—the swift and nimble "Zeros" that would soon terrorize American fighting men all over the Pacific. By the time the second attack wave had been launched, about an hour later, some



Isoroku Yamamoto



Chuichi Nagumo



Mitsuo Fuchida



Minoru Genda

tential of the United States. He knew that its vast industrial base and large population would make it a formidable foe if it ever mustered the political will to fight, and probably an invincible foe if the conflict was protracted. Through the tense debates since 1937 about Japan's foreign policies, Yamamoto's had been a voice of moderation. He did not fully trust Japan's Axis allies, and repeatedly pleaded for alternatives to war with the United States. Yet to Yamamoto had fallen the task of devising the battle plan for that war. A devoted patriot and loyal warrior, Yamamoto had done his duty faithfully—and brilliantly.

The attack on Pearl Harbor fitted Yamamoto's gambler's temperament. It entailed gigantic risks, but also held out the promise of extravagant rewards. If fully successful, it might



350 aircraft, led by Commander Mitsuo Fuchida, were droning southward toward Oahu.

At the very moment that Nagumo ordered his carriers to point their bows into the wind, shortly before noon Washington time, Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall was returning from a Sunday-morning horseback ride to his War Department office in Washington. There aides presented him with a translation of a freshly decrypted message from Tokyo. It contained a lengthy and final reply to the ten-point American position that Secretary of State Cordell Hull had presented to Ambassador Kichisaburo Nomura on November 26, and

instructed Nomura once and for all to break off negotiations. As Marshall scanned the sterile diplomatic prose, he reached its alarming codicil, ordering Nomura to submit the reply "at 1:00 P.M. on the 7th, your time." To Marshall the highly unusual specification of a precise time, and on a Sunday at that, was ominous. The time was scarcely an hour away. Marshall immediately drafted a message to be sent to Army commands in the Philippines, Panama, Hawaii, and San Francisco: "Japanese are presenting at one pm eastern standard time today what amounts to an ultimatum. . . . Just what significance the hour set may have we do not know but be on the

alert accordingly. Inform naval authorities of this communication.” Within minutes the message was encoded and dispatched by radio to all destinations—except Hawaii. Atmospheric conditions were creating heavy static that temporarily blocked the wireless channel to Honolulu. The War Department signal officer chose the next-fastest communication route: a commercial Western Union teletype. The message left Washington on the Western Union wire at 12:17 P.M., and was relayed by the Radio Corporation of America installation near San Francisco to Hawaii. It reached Honolulu sixteen minutes later—7:33 A.M. Hawaii time. A messenger picked up the telegram at RCA’s Honolulu office, mounted his motorcycle, and roared away to deliver it to General Walter C. Short at Fort Shafter, several miles away. Fuchida’s planes were then twenty minutes north of Oahu. Still en route when the attack commenced, the messenger reached Fort Shafter only after Fuchida’s planes had wreaked their destruction.

That communications delay was not the only missed opportunity to spoil the Japanese surprise. As Fuchida’s attackers formed up over their carriers, just before 7:00 A.M., an American destroyer patrolling outside Pearl Harbor’s mouth sighted and depth-bombed a Japanese midget submarine trying to slip into the anchorage. But the destroyer’s report of this contact was discounted as another in a series of frustratingly unconfirmed submarine sightings, and set aside for further verification.

Minutes after the submarine contact, an Army radar operator on northern Oahu reported an unusually large flight of incoming aircraft. They were, in fact, Fuchida’s first wave, still nearly an hour away, but the operator’s superior officer irresponsibly intuited that the blips on the screen represented a flight of B-17 “Flying Fortresses” being ferried in from California to Hickam Field. The officer was brought to this tragic miscalculation at least in part by his recollection that radio station KGMB had been broadcasting all night—a programming schedule that almost invariably meant B-17s were arriving from the mainland, their navigators using the station’s beam as a homing signal. Fuchida’s pilot was meanwhile using that same beam, carrying saccharine Hawaiian tunes, to guide him to Oahu.

When Fuchida sighted land from his lead bomber, at about 7:30, he gave the order to assume attack positions. Below the warplanes the American ships and aircraft lay serenely unsuspecting and virtually undefended, exactly as described by the espionage reports from Japan’s Honolulu consulate. For more than an hour bombs and bullets pelted down on the unmaneuverable American battleships, mostly moored in pairs in “Battleship Row,” off Ford Island, and on the unflyable American airplanes, parked wingtip-to-wingtip at Bellows, Wheeler, and Hickam Fields so that they could be guarded against land-based sabotage. When the last Japanese plane winged away, at about 10:00 A.M., eighteen U.S. naval vessels, including eight battleships, had been sunk or heavily

damaged. More than 180 aircraft were destroyed, and at least 120 disabled. The dead numbered 2,403—1,103 of them entombed in the battleship *Arizona*, which sank rapidly after a bomb exploded in its forward magazine. Another 1,178 men were wounded. Columns of smoke obscured Fuchida’s final reconnaissance as he departed for the *Akagi*, but he knew beyond question that his airmen had triumphantly accomplished their mission.

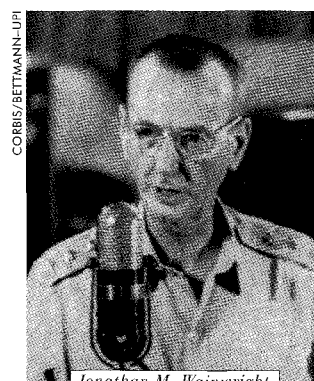
THE PHILIPPINES

VICTORY took only a bit longer in the American colony of the Philippines. At his Manila headquarters Douglas MacArthur, commanding general of U.S. forces in the Far East, learned early in the morning of December 8 that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. Incredibly, and unforgivably, he made no use of the next nine hours to mount a counterattack against Japanese positions on Formosa (Taiwan), as his air commander urged, or even to launch or disperse his own aircraft. They were caught bunched on the ground—“On the ground! On the ground!” President Franklin Roosevelt exclaimed incredulously—when Japanese bombers and fighters appeared overhead shortly after noon. Within minutes MacArthur’s force of some three dozen B-17 bombers, on which he had obstreperously premised his claim to be able to defend the Philippines indefinitely, was severely damaged.

When the Japanese began landing troops on the principal Philippine island of Luzon, on December 22, MacArthur



Douglas MacArthur



Jonathan M. Wainwright

speedily jettisoned his always dubious scheme to repel the invaders on the beaches and on the central Luzon plain, and began gathering men and supplies for a retreat into the Bataan Peninsula and the island fortress of Corregidor, where he set up his command post. MacArthur, sometimes accused of being a legend in his own mind, soon earned himself the derogatory nickname “Dugout Doug,” bestowed on him by his suffering troops on Bataan while he sat in the relative comfort of Corregidor, only once making the brief torpedo-boat run across to the peninsula to hearten his men.

They sorely needed heartening. The swift retreat into the

peninsula of more than 70,000 American and Filipino troops and another 26,000 civilian refugees left them all wretchedly undersupplied. Lacking fresh food, medicines, clean drinking water, and sanitary facilities, thousands fell victim to scurvy, beriberi, malaria, and dysentery.

Knowing that the Philippine garrison was doomed, Roosevelt ordered MacArthur to depart for Australia. On the night of March 12 the general and his family and personal staff were evacuated from Corregidor in four PT boats, leaving General Jonathan M. Wainwright in command. With characteristic self-regard and uncharacteristic lack of orotundity, MacArthur announced, "I shall return." As a face-saving measure—and as a prophylaxis against backlash from the general's many political friends—the President simultaneously conferred upon MacArthur the Congressional Medal of Honor.

The medal was small comfort for the masses of sick soldiers and civilians left behind in the Philippines. Though MacArthur fulminated by radio from his new base in Australia that his troops should break out of Bataan and take to the mountains as guerrillas, Wainwright knew the notion was fatuous. The Bataan contingent surrendered on April 9, and on May 6 an emaciated Wainwright, hopelessly holed up in Corregidor's putrescent Malinta Tunnel, tortured by the resonant moaning of thousands of ill and wounded men crammed into the dank thousand-foot-long shaft, finally capitulated. In his diary Dwight D. Eisenhower took note of these events: "Corregidor surrendered last night. Poor Wainwright! He did the fighting . . . [MacArthur] got such glory as the public could find. . . . MacArthur's tirades, to which TJ [MacArthur's aide, T. J. Davis] and I so often listened in Manila, would now sound as silly to the public as they then did to us. But he's a hero! Yah."

More than a year later, after three American survivors escaped from a prisoner-of-war camp on Mindanao, made their way to Australia, and told the story, the world learned of the cruel episode that then ensued. There were some extenuating circumstances, but these were scarcely sufficient to exonerate the Japanese from the indictment that they behaved with wanton barbarity. The Japanese had planned on bagging some 40,000 prisoners of war in the Philippines sometime in the summer of 1942. Instead they found themselves with nearly 70,000 captives on their hands in April and May, 10,000 of them Americans, all of them suffering from months of siege and illness, as were the Japanese themselves. These logistical and medical problems only exacerbated a more fundamental clash of cultures.

Japanese military leaders had adopted the ancient samurai ethos of *Bushido* to develop a military code that engendered what two scholars have described as "a range of mental attitudes that bordered on psychopathy," including the notion of "surrender as the ultimate dishonor, a belief whose corollary was total contempt for the captive." That contempt the Japa-

nese troops now vented savagely on the American and Filipino captives they herded along the route of the "Bataan Death March," a grisly sixty-five-mile forced trek to crude prisoner-of-war camps near the base of the Bataan Peninsula. Japanese guards denied water to parched prisoners, clubbed and bayoneted stragglers, and subjected all the captives to countless humiliations and agonies. Some 600 Americans and as many as 10,000 Filipinos died along the route of the march. Thousands more perished in the filthy camps. This death march presaged the pitiless inhumanity that came to possess both sides in the ensuing three and a half years of war in the Pacific.

MIDWAY

"The closest squeak and the greatest victory."

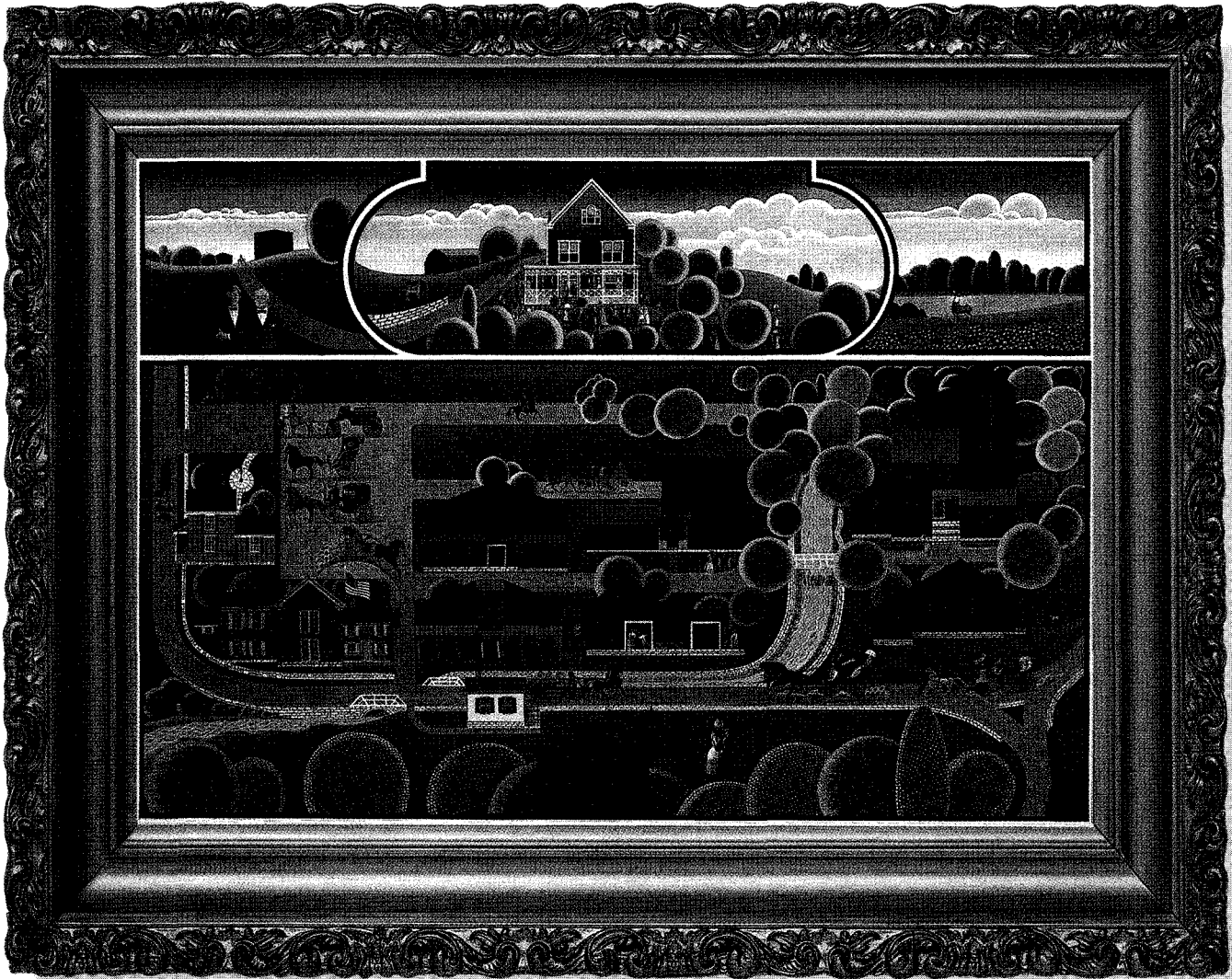
—George C. Marshall on the Battle of Midway

FUCHIDA'S fliers at Pearl Harbor had seen to it that not a single battleship remained in action in the U.S. Pacific Fleet. But battleships were the capital weapons of the previous war. In the war that was now so bloodily begun, aircraft carriers would be trumps, and no U.S. Pacific Fleet carriers had been at Pearl Harbor on December 7. The *Yorktown* had been detached in April for duty in the Atlantic. The *Saratoga* was stateside for repairs. The *Enterprise* and the *Lexington* were at sea near Wake and Midway Islands respectively. Fuchida's raiders had also failed to damage Pearl Harbor's repair shops. More important still, they had left intact the enormous fuel-oil tank farm. Loss of that fuel supply, every drop of it laboriously hauled from the American mainland, would probably have forced the U.S. Navy to retreat to its bases on the West Coast, at a stroke sweeping the western Pacific of American ships more cleanly than any other imaginable action. But Nagumo rejected suggestions that he undertake a second strike, against the repair and fuel facilities, or linger in the area to search for the missing carriers. He seemed paralyzed by the very ease of his victory. He had lost but twenty-nine aircraft, and his fleet remained unsighted. In the historian Gordon Prange's apt words, he must have felt "as if he had rushed forward to break down a door just as someone opened it." For Nagumo, what he had achieved on the morning of December 7 was victory enough. Yet his failure to return for the final, definitive kill risked eventual defeat.

For his part, Adolf Hitler made less than optimal use of the Pearl Harbor attack. Though the strict terms of their alliance with Japan did not require it, since Japan had been the attacker, not the attacked, Hitler and Mussolini on December 11 somewhat impetuously declared war on the United States, which then recognized a state of war with Germany and Italy.

Hitler here missed an opportunity to work incalculable mischief with the American commitment to give precedence to the European war. If Der Führer had not now obligingly declared war on the United States, Roosevelt, given the ap-

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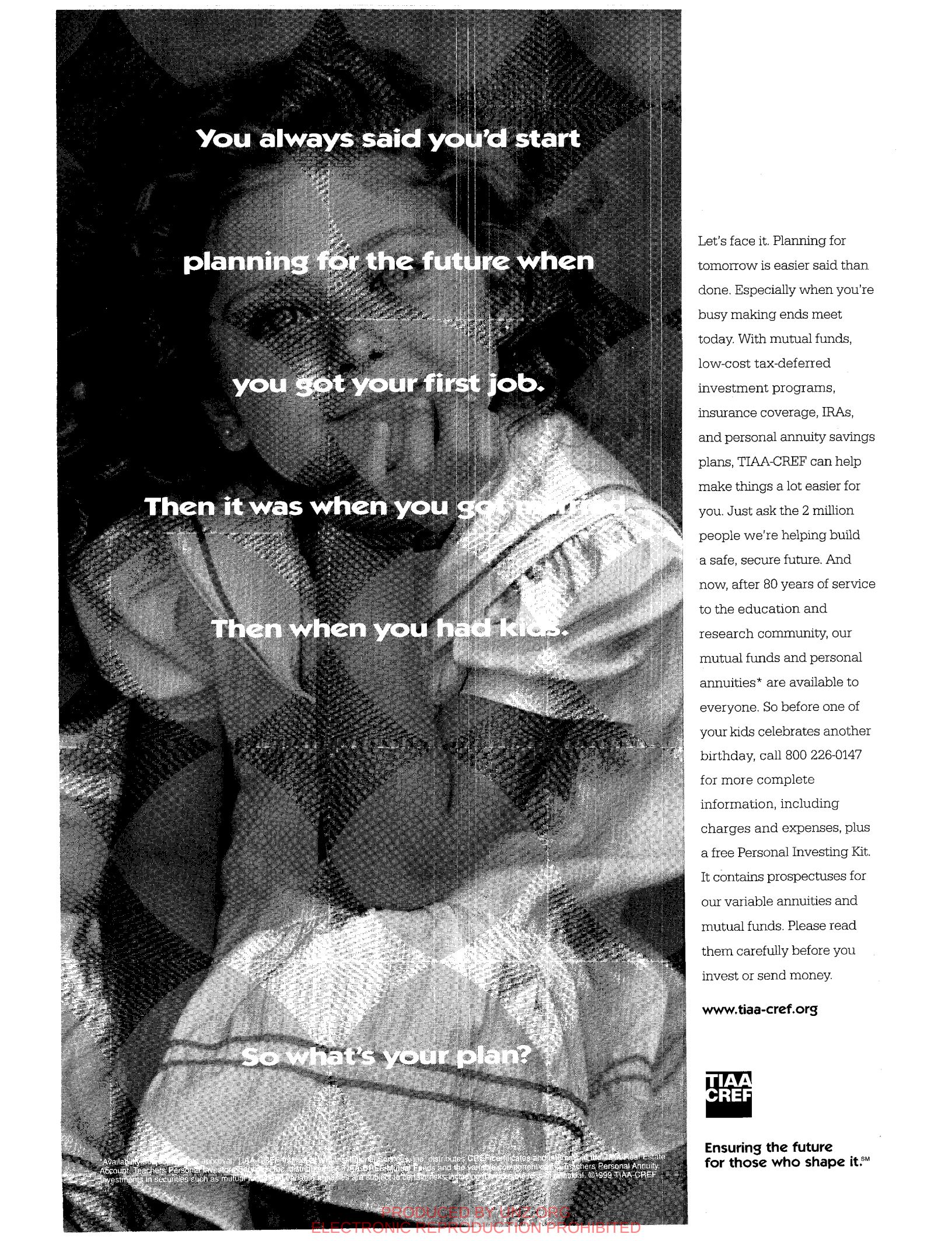
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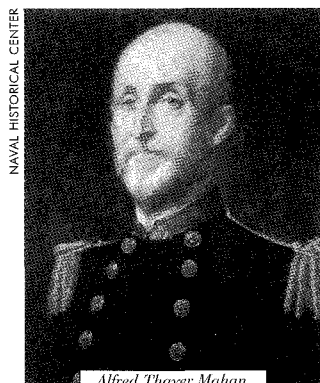
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parent willingness of both sides to acquiesce in protracted and undeclared naval war in the Atlantic, would have had difficulty finding a politically usable occasion for declaring war against Germany. In the absence of such a declaration Roosevelt might well have found it impossible to resist demands to undertake the maximum U.S. effort in the Pacific, against the formally recognized Japanese enemy, rather than in the Atlantic, in an undeclared war against the Germans. This was precisely Churchill's worry, and it was not easily laid to rest. Well after the German declaration of war Roosevelt came under stubborn pressure to give priority to the fight against Japan. Pressure came from the Navy, which always took the Pacific war to be its special province, and from public opinion, infected by a legacy of racial animosity and inflamed by the humiliation of the Pearl Harbor attack.

The string of relatively easy Japanese victories in the first four months of the war provoked a heated debate among Japanese military planners about what their next step should be. The success and momentum of the Southern Operation seemed to dictate one answer: consolidation and buildup of the bases tenuously established in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, followed by further advances into New Caledonia, Fiji, Samoa, and perhaps eventually Australia. But Yamamoto put the full weight of his authority behind a contrary plan. Finish the job begun at Pearl Harbor, he urged, by seizing Midway Island, some 1,100 miles west of Hawaii. Politically, Midway in Japanese hands would menace Hawaii with the threat of invasion, providing a potent bargaining chip with which to force the Americans to negotiate a settlement. Militarily, a Japanese presence on Midway would lure forth the remaining elements of the U.S. Pacific Fleet for the "decisive battle." Toward the waging of that battle Yamamoto's career and the training and preparation of the entire Imperial Japanese Navy had long been consecrated.

The doctrine of the decisive battle was distilled from decades of Japanese planning about how to wage war against the United States in the Pacific. That planning derived in turn, ironically, from the theories of the American naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan. A U.S. naval officer and the president of the Naval War College, Mahan argued in his influential work *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* (1890) that command of the sea was the key to success in war, and that the way to secure the sea was to engage the enemy's main force and destroy it. As Japanese planners adopted this thinking for possible war against the United States, they envisioned the swift capture of the Philippines and Guam, thus



forcing the U.S. fleet to battle. As the U.S. Navy transited the Pacific, Japanese submarines would harass it in the eastern Pacific, and land-based aircraft would strike as it passed through the Marshall and Gilbert Islands. When the weakened fleet approached the Marianas or the Carolines, or perhaps the Philippines, it would confront a fresh, overpowering Japanese naval force and be decisively defeated.

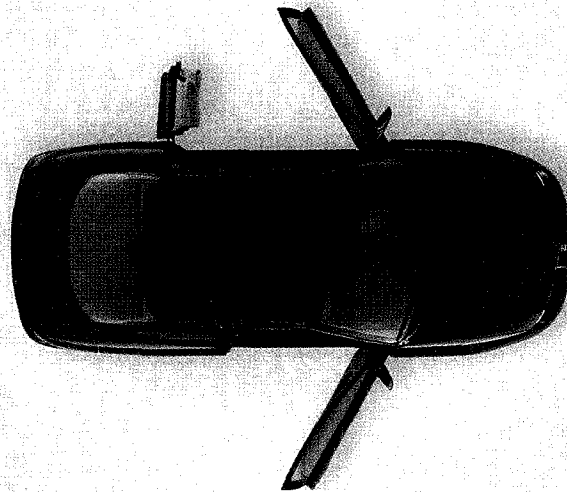
Yamamoto had argued in 1941 that rather than lie in wait for the U.S. fleet in the western Pacific, the Japanese navy should employ the First Air Fleet, embarking some 500 high-performance aircraft, flown by magnificently trained pilots, to mount an attack directly in mid-ocean, at the U.S. base in Pearl Harbor. That task Japan had only partly accomplished on December 7, Yamamoto insisted. Now was the time to hit the Americans again at a place they would be compelled to defend with their full strength—Midway—and destroy the U.S. Pacific Fleet once and for all. With the Pacific cleansed of American ships, Japan would have an unchallenged defensive perimeter, stretching from the North Pacific through mid-ocean to the South Pacific. The Southern Operation would be impregnable secure. Within its perimeter Japan would hold Guam and the Philippines as hostages, and perhaps Hawaii and Australia as well. Safe behind this barrier, Japan could easily sustain a strategically defensive posture, and sue for a negotiated peace on terms it dictated. These were heady notions. In May of 1942 they intoxicated even such a calculating pragmatist as Yamamoto. The faint prospect of victory that had earlier swum mistily at the outermost rim of his imagination, the military historian John Keegan has written, now "seemed to lie only one battle away."

AMERICAN strategic doctrine for war against Japan was virtually the mirror image of this Japanese thinking. Code-named the "Orange Plan," it had first been formulated early in the century, and also reflected Mahan's influence. The Orange Plan assumed an early Japanese capture of the Philippines, and made relief of the Philippines the main U.S. objective. The American garrison there was supposed to hold out for three or four months while the U.S. fleet crossed the Pacific, engaged the main body of the Japanese fleet, destroyed it, and thereby ended the war. Always unrealistic, the plan was revised in 1935 to provide for the capture of the Marshall and Caroline Islands as staging areas for the main engagement with the Japanese fleet—a tacit admission that the war would last years, not months, and an admission as well of the cynicism that had always underlain expectations about the sacrificial role of the Philippine garrison. Yet whatever its flaws, the Orange Plan constituted the foundation of the U.S. Pacific war strategy in 1942, and would in many ways continue to do so right down to 1945. In the two interwar decades war games were fought at the Naval War College on these assumptions no fewer than 127 times, planting the Orange Plan's premises deep in the American strategic mind.

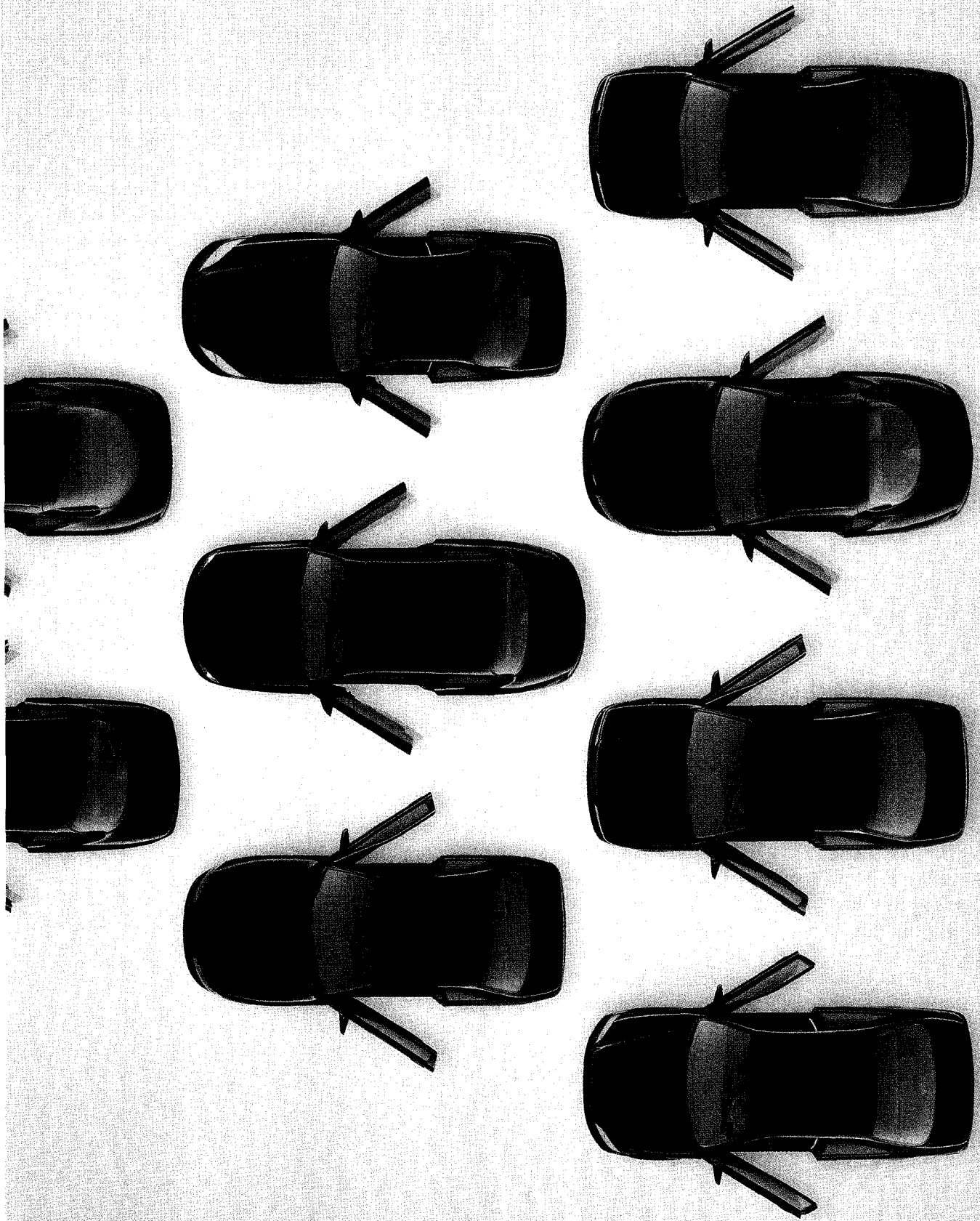
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In early 1942, however, the United States could not possibly muster a naval force that would even begin to make Orange operational. The only event that had conformed to the plan's predictions was the loss of the Philippines, and it would take not three months but more than three years to retrieve them. As a partial and weak substitute for the great fleet action envisioned by Orange, small strike forces engaged in hit-and-run raids on scattered Japanese island outposts.

By far the most daring and consequential of these raids struck not against outlying military stations in the far Pacific but against the Japanese home islands themselves. Probing carefully westward past Midway Island to within 650 miles of Tokyo, the USS *Hornet* on April 18 launched sixteen cumbersome B-25 bombers never designed to be flown from a carrier deck. Wobbling up over the violently churning sea, the planes sidled into formation behind their leader, Lieutenant Colonel James H. Doolittle. They bombed Tokyo and a handful of other Japanese cities and then, at the extreme limit of their flying range, crash-landed in China. Japanese occupation troops captured some of the airmen. One died in prison, and three were executed after facing charges at a show trial that they had bombed civilian buildings and machine-gunned

a school. Not incidentally, these events further fed the appetites of both sides for a war of vengeance.

The Doolittle raid did little material damage. The Japanese government made no official acknowledgment of the attack, even to its own citizens, to whom the scattered and mostly harmless explosions of April 18 remained somewhat myster-

ious. But Doolittle's B-25s packed a momentous psychological wallop. They vividly demonstrated to Japanese military leaders the vulnerability of their home islands through the Midway slot in Japan's defensive perimeter. To all of Yamamoto's already weighty arguments about the attractions of an attack on Midway, the necessity of sealing that slot was now added. Debate ceased in the Japanese high command about the relative priority of the South or Central Pacific. Both operations would now go forward, straining to the utmost the already stretched resources of the imperial navy.

Summoning Nagumo, the hero of Pearl Harbor, Yamamoto began to fit the First Air Fleet for an offensive operation against Midway Island. Nagumo's orders this time were to land an occupation force on Midway and begin its outfitting as a forward base, which would lure the Americans to the decisive battle, and which might serve in time as a launching ground for the invasion of Hawaii. It was Yamamoto's most ambitious plan ever, overshadowing even the audacity of the

December 7 attack, and it demonstrated that not even this prudent planner was immune to the recklessness induced by "victory disease."

Nagumo believed that his failure to find the American carriers in port on December 7 had been handsomely redressed in May of 1942 at the Battle of the Coral Sea, where Japanese pilots had reported sinking two American carriers. Though two Japanese carriers, the *Shokaku* and the *Zuikaku*, were sufficiently damaged or had their air squadrons so shredded at Coral Sea that they could not take part in the assault on Midway, the First Air Fleet retained the *Akagi*, the *Kaga*, the *Hiryu*, and the *Soryu*, a still-potent quartet of fleet-class carriers that embarked more than 270 warplanes. Nagumo also trusted in the complicated battle plan for the Midway operation, which called for a diversionary raid on Alaska's Aleutian Island chain, to draw off American naval strength. And of course Yamamoto and Nagumo both took comfort from the reflection that they held again, as they had so triumphantly at Pearl Harbor, the hole card of secrecy. Anticipating the decisive battle that would crown his career and seal his nation's dream of empire, amid lavish pomp and ceremony on May 27, the anniversary of the Battle of Tsushima Strait, Nagumo sortied the First Air Fleet through the Bungo Strait from Japan's Inland Sea—and into the jaws of a trap.

While Yamamoto and Nagumo had gathered the nearly 200 ships of the Midway strike force from over the far horizons that bounded Japan's immense area of conquest, American cryptanalysts had feverishly studied their transcripts of the swelling volume of encoded Japanese radio traffic, trying to determine where Japan would strike next. The collective effort to crack the Japanese codes was known as "Magic," and in the upcoming Battle of Midway, Magic would demonstrate its military value along with the aptness of its name.

Working without sleep amid spine-cracking tension in a windowless basement room at Pearl Harbor, Commander Joseph J. Rochefort, the chief of the Combat Intelligence Unit colloquially known as "Station Hypo," pored over the maddeningly fragmentary intercepts piled atop his makeshift worktable of planks and sawhorses. Rochefort had adapted to this molelike existence by working in slippers and a red smoking jacket. In the spit-and-polish Navy, he and his equally unkempt colleagues were regarded as eccentric. But their knowledge of the Japanese language, in a Navy that had only about forty competent Japanese-speakers, was indispensable, as was their mastery of the arcana of cryptanalysis—the sorcerer's art of deciphering the enemy's most



James H. Doolittle

NAVAL HISTORICAL CENTER



Chester W. Nimitz

NAVAL HISTORICAL CENTER



Joseph J. Rochefort

of 1942, one term recurred with unsettling frequency: “AF,” obviously the name of the next major Japanese target. Where or what was “AF”?

Rochefort had a hunch, and he played it shrewdly. Guessing that AF was Midway, in early May he baited a snare by arranging for the small Marine and Army Air Force garrison at Midway to radio in clear that their distillation plant had malfunctioned and they were running short of fresh water. The ruse worked. Within two days Station Hypo received confirmation of a coded Japanese message that “AF” was low on fresh water. Jackpot! Midway it was, then, and Hypo had proved it. The U.S. Navy would be there, ready and waiting.

ADMIRAL Chester W. Nimitz wasted no time in using Rochefort’s information, which proved to be the single most valuable intelligence contribution to the entire Pacific war. A descendant of German colonists who had settled the west-Texas Pedernales River country early in the nineteenth century, Nimitz was a quiet, scholarly man, fluent in his ancestral tongue. He sought relaxation by firing his pistol on a target range. He had arrived in Hawaii to take up the position of commander in chief of the Pacific Fleet on Christmas morning, 1941. The whaleboat ferrying him from his seaplane to shore had passed the devastated hulks along Battleship Row and threaded through small craft that were still retrieving surfacing bodies from the sunken ships. As much as any man in the Navy, Nimitz burned to retaliate for Decem-

carefully guarded communications codes.

Station Hypo’s nemesis and obsession was the Japanese naval code, JN-25. It was an immensely complex cipher, and Rochefort and his colleagues could make sense of only 10 to 15 percent of most intercepts. But in the welter of communications traffic that Hypo was monitoring in the spring

ber 7. But in what his naval-academy class book described as his “calm and steady Dutch way,” he was determined to do it methodically, with a minimum of risk and more than a fair chance of success. Rochefort’s cryptanalysts had now handed this careful, deliberate man a priceless opportunity.

Nimitz reinforced Midway with planes, troops, and anti-aircraft batteries. He ordered Task Force 16, comprising the carriers *Enterprise* and *Hornet*, back to Pearl Harbor from the South Pacific. He issued similar orders to Rear Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher’s Task Force 17, left with only the wounded *Yorktown* after the inconclusive Battle of the Coral Sea. The *Yorktown* limped into Pearl Harbor on May 27, trailing a long, glistening oil slick as she nosed into a giant dry dock. A hip-booted Nimitz was sloshing about at her keel inspecting the damage even before the dry dock had fully drained. Told that repairs would take weeks, a reasonable estimate, Nimitz curtly announced that he must have the ship made seaworthy in three days. The dry dock instantly became a human anthill. Hundreds of workers swarmed over the *Yorktown*, amid showers of sparks and clouds of smoke from the acetylene torches cutting away and replacing her damaged hull plates. The *Yorktown* refloated on May 29. The next day, accompanied by her support ships in Task Force 17, as the ship’s band incongruously played “California, Here I Come,” she headed toward the rendezvous point—hopefully dubbed “Point Luck”—with Task Force 16, commanded by Rear Admiral Raymond A. Spruance. Fletcher, aboard the *Yorktown*, was in overall command of the task forces.

While the three American carriers stealthily moved to their stations northeast of Midway, Nagumo approached from the northwest. The Japanese commander had good reason to assume that only the *Enterprise* and the *Hornet* remained afloat in the U.S. Pacific fleet, and he believed them to be in the South Pacific, where they had been spotted on May 15. As dawn approached on June 4, Nagumo had no inkling that Fletcher and Spruance awaited him beyond Midway, over the eastern horizon. All his attention focused on Midway Island, from which B-17s and Catalina flying boats had ineffectually bombed his troop transports during the preceding afternoon and night.



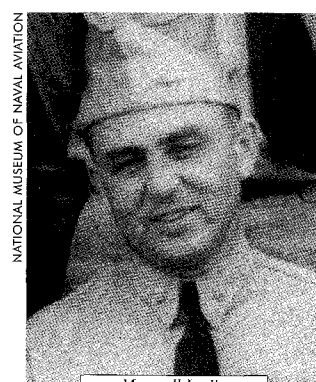
Frank Jack Fletcher



Raymond A. Spruance



Wade McCluskey



Maxwell Leslie

At 4:30 A.M. on June 4 Nagumo flew off several squadrons of bombers to attack Midway, preparatory to the troop landings. They dropped their ordnance—high-explosive fragmentation bombs designed for ground targets—according to plan. But the commander asked for a second strike to finish the reduction of Midway's defenses. His message arrived just as Nagumo's carriers were coming under attack from Midway-based aircraft. Not a single American bomb touched his ships, but the very appearance of the American planes was enough to persuade Nagumo to accede to the request for a second strike on Midway. On the *Akagi* and the *Kaga*, Nagumo had been holding some ninety-three aircraft loaded with armor-piercing anti-ship ordnance, against the possibility that he might engage elements of the U.S. fleet. But at 7:15, increasingly confident that he had little to fear from American ships, he gave the order to rearm those aircraft with fragmentation bombs for a second assault against Midway. The refitting operation would take about an hour.

Even as Nagumo's perspiring sailors set about their task, Spruance, still to the northeast of Midway, was ordering full deckloads of bombers and torpedo planes on the *Enterprise* and the *Hornet* to lift off and strike the Japanese carriers. Nagumo's seamen toiled about the decks of his giant carriers, shuffling bomb-racks and hurriedly stacking torpedoes. Then, in the midst of the complicated rearmament operation, the Japanese cruiser *Tone's* scout plane reported at 7:28 that ten enemy ships were in sight. Their position was within range of carrier-based aircraft, but the initial report did not identify the types of ships. Nagumo nevertheless decided as a precaution to halt the rearmament process. Meanwhile, he implored the reconnaissance plane to ascertain the ship types.

Nagumo's skull must have throbbed with the agonies of decision and command. He was still under attack from Midway-based aircraft; his own returning assault planes were beginning to appear overhead; his decks were stacked with bombs of all types; and an unexpected American fleet had been spotted. Ominously, the *Tone's* patrol plane next radioed that the enemy flotilla was turning into the wind—the position from which carriers launch their aircraft. Apprehension gripped the surprised Japanese, only to be allayed moments later by a report that the enemy flotilla consisted of five cruisers and five destroyers—and then to be revived by a message minutes afterward that the rising dawn had revealed a carrier in the rear of the American formation.

This news was alarming but not catastrophic. Nagumo still believed that his force was far superior in numbers, technology, and skill to anything the Americans could throw against him. Indeed, even while anxiously awaiting word from the *Tone* scout plane, the First Air Fleet's ships and fighters had badly mauled the Midway-based attackers, not one of which had yet managed to score a hit. Mitsuo Fuchida, the Pearl Harbor veteran serving as the *Akagi's* flight leader, later wrote, "We had by this time undergone every kind of air at-

tack by shore-based planes—torpedo, level bombing, dive-bombing—but were still unscathed. Frankly, it was my judgment that the enemy fliers were not displaying a very high level of ability."

Emboldened by such thoughts, the Japanese now saw the American carrier less as a threat than as an opportunity for inflicting additional punishment on the inept Americans. The battle thus far had emphatically confirmed Japanese combat superiority. Apprehension gave way to resolve—and to a fatal relaxation of the sense of urgency. Nagumo, confident that he held the upper hand, calmly waited to recover all his Midway bombers and fighters before magisterially turning to meet the American flotilla, still believing that only a single carrier confronted him. Meanwhile, he reversed his earlier rearmament order and directed his planes to be fitted with anti-ship weapons once again, adding to the confusion and the piles of explosive ordnance strewn about his flight decks.

Shortly after 9:00 A.M. Nagumo executed his change of course to close with the American fleet, perhaps even to force the decisive battle that was the stuff of the Japanese navy's dreams. What followed was decisive, all right, but for Japan and the imperial navy it was a nightmare.

Nagumo's several armament changes and his delay in seizing the initiative contributed powerfully to his undoing, but for the moment his change of course proved advantageous. Many of the American planes launched from the *Hornet* and the *Enterprise*, along with some from the *Yorktown*, which had put its airmen aloft at around 8:30, never found him. Flying at the limits of their operational range, they arrived at the sector where the Japanese were supposed to be, only to look out over empty seas. Many wandering American aircraft fell from the sky for want of fuel. Those who did locate the Japanese fleet tried in vain to penetrate the curtain of anti-aircraft fire and the swarming Zeros to reach the Japanese carriers. Shortly after 10:00 A.M. a clutch of Zeros almost completely annihilated a torpedo-bombing squadron from the *Yorktown* as it came in low to launch its weapons. By 10:24 Nagumo appeared to have beaten off the last of the attacks. His proud fleet was still unscratched and was poised to loft a counterattack against the American fleet. For a brief moment Japan seemed to have won the Battle of Midway, and perhaps the war.

One American flier scanning the scene from above was on the verge of coming to just that conclusion when suddenly he saw "a beautiful silver waterfall" of "Dauntless" dive bombers cascading down on the Japanese carriers. Navigating by guess and by God, Lieutenant Commander Wade McCluskey, from the *Enterprise*, and Lieutenant Commander Maxwell Leslie, from the *Yorktown*, had managed to arrive above the Japanese fleet at the precise moment its combat air patrol of Zeros had been drawn down to the deck to repel the *Yorktown's* torpedo bombers, and at the moment of the First Air Fleet's maximum vulnerability. With the dread

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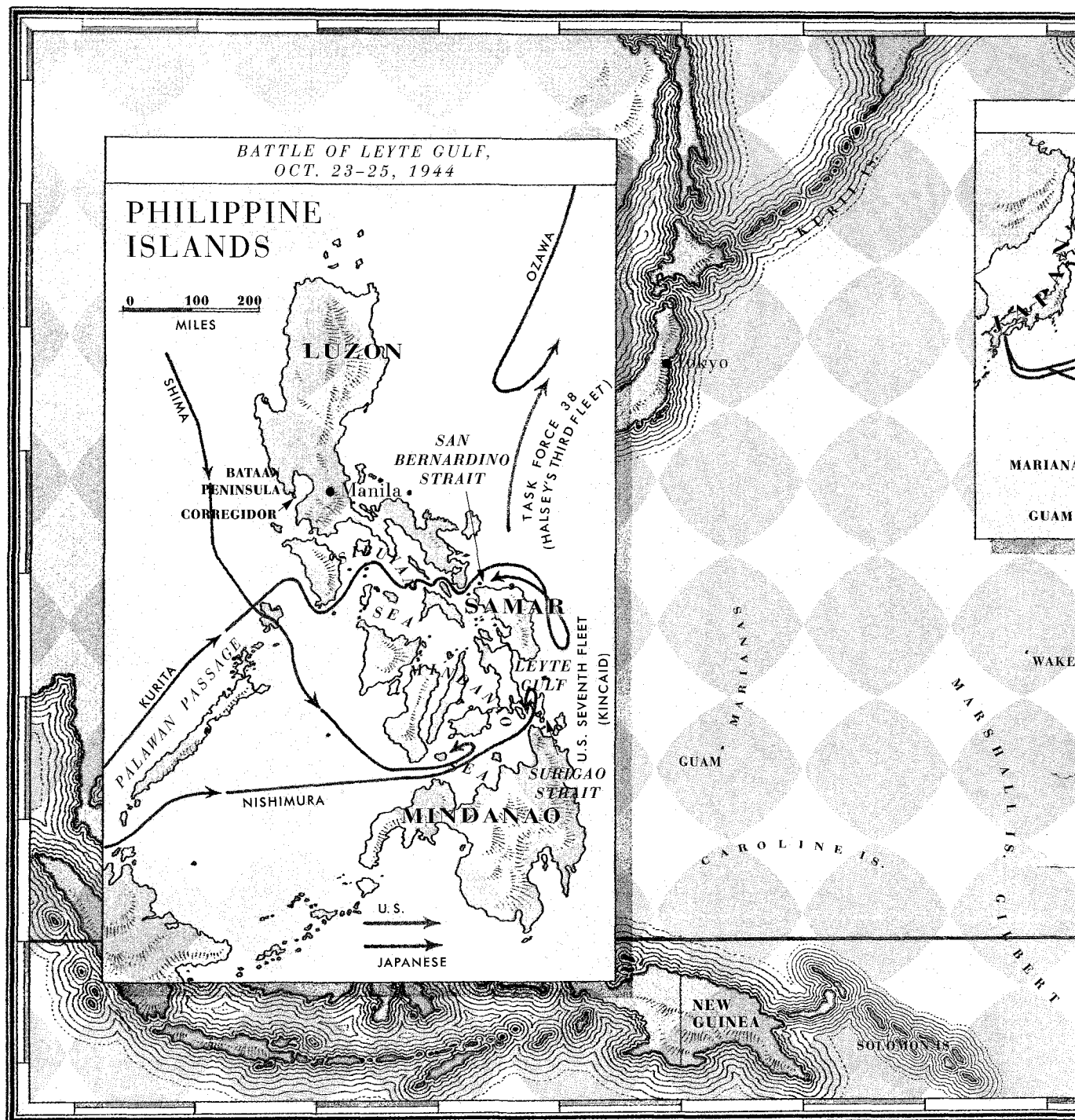
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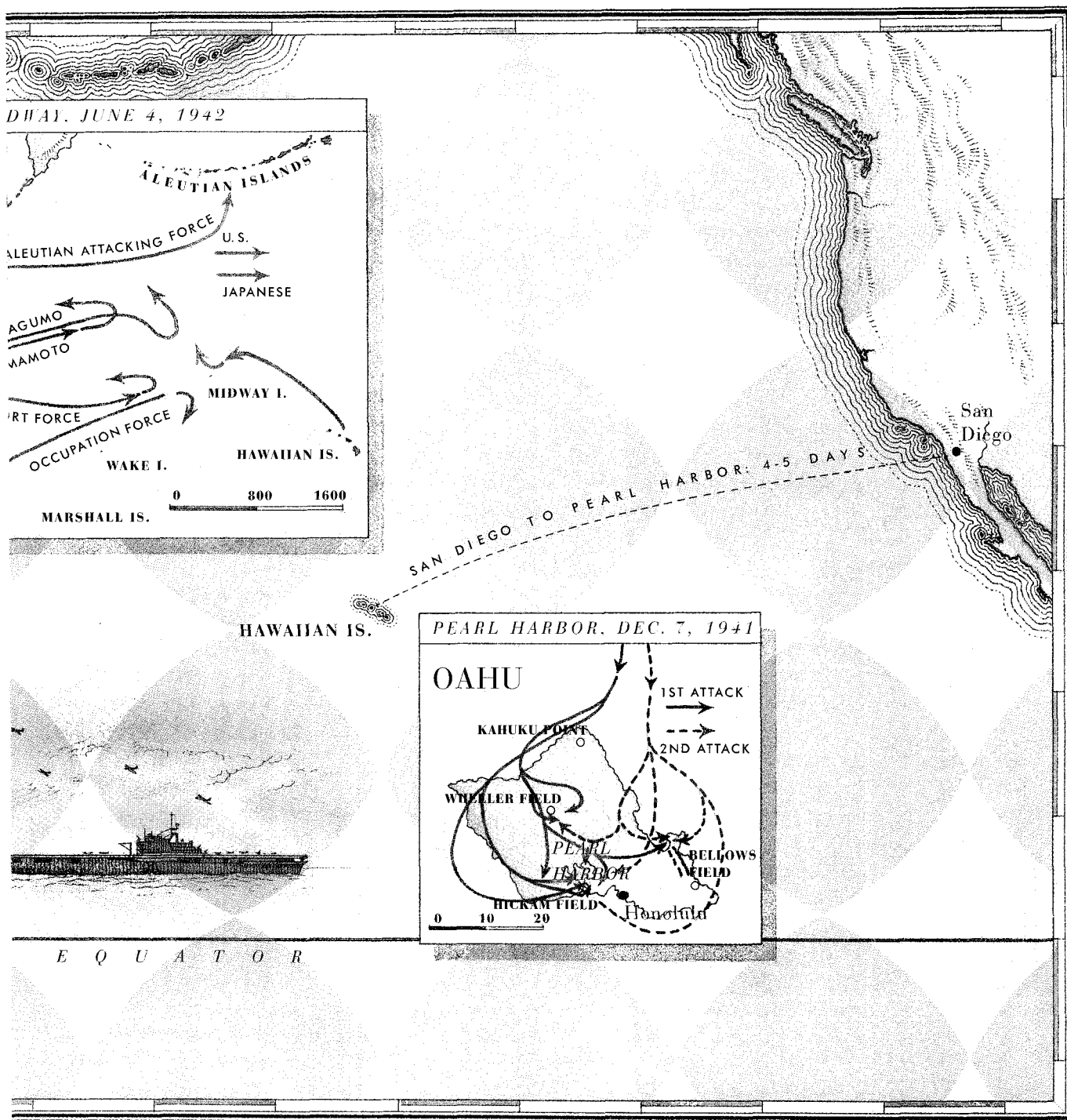
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Zeros too low to be effective, the Dauntlesses poured down through the miraculously open sky to unload their bombs on the Japanese carriers, their flight decks cluttered with confused ranks of recovered and warming-up aircraft, snaking fuel hoses, and stacks of munitions from the various rearmament operations.

In five minutes the dive bombers, no less miraculously scoring the first American hits of the day, mortally wounded three Japanese carriers. Roaring gasoline-fed fires raged through all three ships. The *Kaga* and the *Soryu* sank before sunset. The *Akagi* was scuttled during the night. Of the First

Air Fleet's magnificent flotilla of carriers, only the *Hiryu* remained to strike a counterblow against Fletcher's flagship, the battered *Yorktown*, which the sea enveloped at last at dawn on June 7. The *Hiryu* itself was overtaken by American fliers in the afternoon of June 4, and sank the next morning. Nagumo had lost four of the six carriers with which he had attacked Pearl Harbor just half a year earlier. Spruance wisely refrained from pursuing the remaining Japanese vessels, which were retreating to the west, where he would have collided with Yamamoto's battleships—swift, powerful, night-trained, and thirsty for vengeance—just as darkness fell.



Inset maps are based on maps executed for David M. Kennedy's *Freedom From Fear* by Jeff Ward; they have been used with permission from Oxford University Press

At Midway the Americans turned the trick of surprise back upon the Japanese and at least partially avenged Pearl Harbor. When the chaos of combat had subsided, the essential truth of Midway stood revealed: in just five minutes of incredible, gratuitous favor from the gods of battle, McCluskey's and Leslie's dive bombers had done nothing less than turn the tide of the Pacific war. Before Midway the Japanese had six large fleet-class carriers afloat in the Pacific, and the Americans three (four with the *Saratoga*, which was returning from repairs on the West Coast at the time of the battle at Midway). With the loss of just one American

and four Japanese carriers, including their complements of aircraft and many of their superbly trained fliers, Midway inverted the carrier ratio and put the Japanese navy at a disadvantage from which it never recovered. In the two years following Midway, Japanese shipyards managed to splash only six additional fleet carriers. The United States in the same period added seventeen, along with ten medium carriers and eighty-six escort carriers. Such numbers, to be repeated in myriad categories of war materiel, spelled certain doom for Japan, though it was still a long and harrowing distance in the future.

THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

AMERICA'S war against Germany, like its war against Japan, began at sea, and began just as badly for the poorly prepared United States. The Battle of the Atlantic, which had pitted Britain against Germany since 1939, was a contest for supremacy on the ocean highway across which all American supplies and troops must flow to Europe. Everything depended on keeping that highway open. Dwight Eisenhower, newly promoted to brigadier general and freshly installed as chief of the Army's War Plans Division, submitted a penetrating assessment of the importance of the North Atlantic sea-lanes to George Marshall on February 28, 1942. "Maximum safety of these lines of communication is a 'must' in our military effort, no matter what else we attempt to do," Eisenhower emphasized. Shipping, he presciently added, "will remain the bottleneck of our effective effort," a statement that echoed repeated pronouncements by both Churchill and Roosevelt that the struggle with Hitler would be won or lost at sea.

It looked at first more likely to be lost. When he declared war on the United States, shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack, Hitler untethered the German submarine service from the restraints against which it had long chafed. Karl Dönitz, the chief of the German submarine fleet, could now loose his U-boats (from the German word for "submarine," *Unterseeboot*) as far westward as America's Atlantic shoreline, cutting the Allied supply lines at their source and avenging the insults of America's increasingly open support of Britain, especially the Lend-Lease Act of 1941. Dönitz determined "to strike a blow at the American coast" with a *Paukenschlag*, a word usually translated as "drumbeat" but also connoting "thunderbolt." German submariners themselves described the campaign against U.S. coastal shipping as the "Happy Time," or even the "American Turkey Shoot." By whatever name, the naval blitzkrieg that Dönitz launched in early 1942 threatened to shut down America's war against Hitler almost before it could get started.

As early as mid-January, 1942, Dönitz had dispatched five U-boats, each packing fourteen to twenty-two torpedoes, to the eastern coastal waters of the United States. Additional boats soon followed, their operational range and ability to remain on battle station enhanced by submarine tankers, or *Milchkuhen* (milk cows), that refueled the U-boats at sea. Within just two weeks Dönitz's undersea raiders sank thirty-five ships in the waters between Newfoundland and Bermuda—a loss of more than 200,000 tons. The prize targets were tankers lumbering up from Caribbean and Gulf Coast oil ports to northeastern refineries and storage depots. "By attacking the supply traffic—particularly the oil—in the U.S. zone," Dönitz said, "I am striking at the root of the evil, for here the sinking of each ship is not only a loss to the enemy

but also deals a blow at the source of his shipbuilding and war production. Without shipping the [English] sally-port cannot be used for an attack on Europe."

Still imagining the war to be far away, and fearing to cramp the tourist trade, seaboard cities like New York, Atlantic City, and Miami refused to enforce blackouts. The backdrop of their bright lights, visible up to ten miles from shore, created a neon shooting gallery in which the U-boats nightly lay in wait on the seaward side of the shipping lanes and picked off their sharply silhouetted victims at will. U-boats prowling the Atlantic coast in January sank eight ships, including three tankers, in just twelve hours. On February 28 a German submarine torpedoed and sank the American destroyer *Jacob Jones* in sight of the New Jersey coast. Only eleven of its crew members survived. On the evening of April 10 a surfaced U-boat used its deck gun to scuttle the *Gulfamerica* off Jacksonville Beach, Florida. The flaming tanker went down so close to shore that the departing U-boat commander gazed in fascination through his binoculars as thousands of tourists, their faces bathed in the red glow of the ship's fire, poured out of their hotels and restaurants to gape at the spectacle. "All the vacationers had seen an impressive special performance at Roosevelt's expense," Commander Reinhard Hard-egen gleefully recorded in his log. "A burning tanker, artillery fire, the silhouette of a U-boat—how often had all of that been seen in America?" In broad daylight on June 15 a U-boat torpedoed two American freighters within full view of thousands of horrified vacationers at Virginia Beach, Virginia. By July of 1942, 4.7 million tons of Allied shipping had gone to the bottom, the majority in the operational area of American coastal waters that the Navy called the Eastern Sea Frontier. Tanker sinkings were consuming 3.5 percent of available oil-carrying capacity every month—a rate of loss so ominous that Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Ernest J. King had recently confined all tankers to port for two weeks.

To counter the U-boat menace King could at first do little. In Roosevelt's quaint phrase, there was simply a "lack of naval butter to cover the bread." The U.S. Atlantic Fleet was already hard pressed to shoulder its modest share of the burden of escorting North Atlantic convoys, and the sudden flaring of the Pacific war consumed virtually all new naval construction. The entire anti-submarine force available to the Eastern Sea Frontier command when the German sub offensive began consisted of three 110-foot wooden sub-chasers, two 173-foot patrol craft, a handful of First World War-vintage picket ships and Coast Guard cutters, and 103 antiquated short-range aircraft, almost none of them equipped with submarine-seeking radar. For a time this puny fleet was supplemented by the Coastal Picket Patrol, or "Hooligan Navy," a motley flotilla organized by private yachtsmen (including a pistol-and-grenade-toting Ernest Hemingway at the helm of his sport-fishing boat *Pilar*). They formed a swashbuckling but decidedly amateurish patrol line some fifty miles offshore,

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Merciless Attacks by Subs On Lifeboats Related

Picture of survivors on scene in Atlantic Ocean after a U-boat attack on a ship. The picture shows a group of men in lifeboats, some of whom are being rescued by a U.S. Navy ship. The U-boat is seen in the background, having just attacked the ship. The survivors are being rescued by a U.S. Navy ship, and the U-boat is seen in the background, having just attacked the ship.

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U-BOATS SINK ONE

1 Countries
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Continued on Page Three

reporting countless false submarine sightings that caused further dissipation of the Eastern Sea Frontier's desperately scant resources.

In an ironic reversal of the Lend-Lease help that America had extended to Britain a year earlier, the Royal Navy transferred ten escort vessels and two dozen anti-submarine trawlers to the Americans for coastal defense, along with two squadrons of aircraft. In a compound irony, the planes had originally been built in the United States. But even as the Eastern Sea Frontier began to accumulate the rudiments of an anti-submarine force, King persisted in deploying it badly. Contrary to all the hard-won lessons of the North Atlantic naval war, King clung to the belief that inadequately escorted convoys were worse than none, because they made

for concentrated targets, only thinly protected. In consequence, merchant ships continued to sail independently, making easy prey for single submarines, while the handful of vessels that the Eastern Sea Frontier could muster to protect coastal shipping were dispatched together in futile pursuit of frequently phantom sightings. King's stubbornness infuriated his colleagues. King was "the antithesis of cooperation, a deliberately rude person . . . a mental bully," Eisenhower noted in his diary. "One thing that might help win this war is to get someone to shoot King."

When King finally relented and in May organized a convoy system along the Atlantic coast, the results were dramatic. Just fourteen ships went down in the Eastern Sea Frontier that month, a sharp decline from the winter's disastrous rates of loss. Dönitz's boats continued to prey on Caribbean shipping for another two months, but by the summer of 1942 the Interlocking Convoy System protected coastwise sailings from Brazil to Newfoundland. At the end of July, Dönitz withdrew his last two U-boats from North American waters. Paukensschlag was ended. It had dealt a grievous blow to American shipping and measurably slowed American mo-



Karl Dönitz



Ernest J. King

bilization, not to mention wounding the pride of the U.S. Navy, but it had been stopped short of catastrophe. The Eastern Sea Frontier was secure.

If Dönitz had retired from the American coastline, it was merely to concentrate his forces in the mid-ocean zone where the Battle of the Atlantic was now most fiercely joined. After re-allocating the last of the U-boats from the *Paukenslag*, Dönitz had well over 200 submarines available for deployment in the broad Atlantic. German boatyards were adding at least fifteen new submarines to his fleet every month. Against those growing numbers Dönitz tallied his estimates of Allied carrying capacity and replacement rates. If he could sink

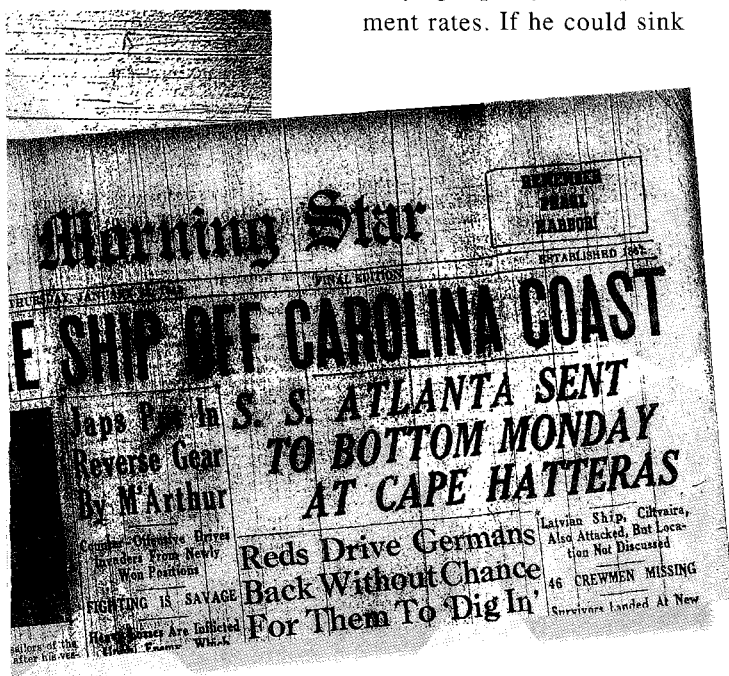
percent of the escorts in the North Atlantic.) When aided by aerial reconnaissance, the escorts had a fighting chance of harassing the U-boats away from the convoy's path. But once a submerged wolf pack had closed undetected to torpedo range, it could wreak wholesale destruction on convoy and escorts alike. The U-boats naturally concentrated, therefore, in those ocean areas out of range of Allied aircraft. There they could steam with impunity on the surface, diving only for the final attack. They especially favored two locations: the Norwegian Sea, the far northern passage to the Russian ports of Murmansk and Archangel; and the "air gap" southeast of Greenland, through which all convoys to both Britain and Russia had to pass. One combined surface, undersea, and air attack on the Russia-bound convoy PQ17 in the Norwegian Sea in July forced the escorting warships to separate from the convoy, and then scattered and sank twenty-two of the thirty-three merchantmen, an especially large loss. In August and September, U-boats attacked seven convoys in the Greenland air gap and sank forty-three ships. In November total Allied losses again topped 800,000 tons, 729,000 of which fell to the U-boats.

Nature added to the Allies' woes in the man-and-ship-eating North Atlantic. Blast-force winds, towering green seas, snow squalls, and ice storms claimed nearly a hundred ships during the winter of 1942–1943. In March of 1943 a screaming gale slammed two convoys together, chaotically scrambling their sailing columns and wreaking wild confusion among their escorts. Dönitz capitalized on the disruption by dispatching several wolf packs to feed on the havoc. At a cost of just one U-boat lost, twenty-two merchantmen were sunk out of the ninety that had set sail from New York a few days earlier, along with one of the escort vessels.

At these rates of loss the Atlantic lifeline might soon have been permanently severed. In fact, the disaster of PQ17 contributed to the Western Allies' decision to suspend all North Atlantic convoys to the Russians for the remainder of 1942, triggering bitter complaints from Stalin. (The alternate but much-lower-capacity supply route to Russia, through the Persian Gulf and overland from Iran, remained open.) As for Britain, the sinkings in the Atlantic had by year's end cut its civilian oil reserves to a three-month supply, and imports of all kinds had withered to two thirds of pre-war levels.

THE TIDE TURNS IN THE ATLANTIC

WHEN Churchill and Roosevelt met at Casablanca in mid-January of 1943 to discuss the war's progress, they were given a spectacular reminder of the continuing importance and unrelieved vulnerability of the Atlantic lifeline. Just days before the two statesmen greeted each other in the Moroccan city, U-boats off the West Afri-



700,000 tons of Allied merchant shipping a month, he calculated, victory would be his: Britain would face starvation, Russia defeat, and America permanent isolation on the far side of the Atlantic. By mid-1942 success seemed to be at hand, as worldwide Allied shipping losses exceeded 800,000 tons a month. Despite frantic round-the-clock construction in both British and American shipyards, new Allied shipbuilding could not offset deficits on that scale. For 1942 as a whole, the Germans sank more than eight million tons of U.S. and British shipping, a loss that threatened to rob the Allies of their war-making power if not soon reversed. "The U-boat attack was our worst evil," Churchill later wrote, "the only thing that ever really frightened me during the war."

Cruising in packs of a dozen or more, the U-boats inflicted damage that only grew more costly as 1942 unfolded. The Allied convoys were typically composed of ten columns totaling about sixty vessels, mostly American merchantmen carrying mostly American cargoes. They slogged eastward at eight or nine knots, loosely jacketed by as many as a dozen warships, almost all of them British or Canadian, weaving warily around their flanks. (The U.S. Navy provided just two

can coast had attacked a special convoy ferrying precious oil from Trinidad to support the North African campaign. Just as the Casablanca conference opened, the convoy's few survivors reached Gibraltar, directly across the mouth of the Mediterranean from Morocco, telling harrowing tales of the shattering losses they had witnessed: seven of nine tankers sunk, 55,000 tons of shipping and more than 100,000 tons of fuel gone. It was one of the most devastating U-boat attacks of the war. That sorry spectacle surely reinforced Churchill's and Roosevelt's determination to gain the upper hand in the Atlantic.

But though even greater losses lay ahead, in fact the Battle of the Atlantic was already turning in the Allies' favor, and with astonishing swiftness. British scientists had in December of 1942 finally broken the Triton cipher, the German code through which Dönitz communicated with his subs. Most important, the arrival from American shipyards of additional escort vessels—particularly the new escort carriers, or “baby flat-tops,” that were built on merchant hulls, carried about two dozen aircraft, and were designed principally for ferrying aircraft, anti-submarine patrol, and close-in tactical air support for beach assaults—at last gave the Allies an insuperable advantage.

The U-boats of this era were in fact not true submarines at all but submersible torpedo boats that could dive for brief periods before, during, and after an attack. They were unable to remain submerged for long, and were not designed for high-speed running under water. To reach their attack stations, to overtake prey, or to replenish their air supply, they were obliged to steam on the surface, where they were especially vulnerable to being sighted and assaulted from the air. When Roosevelt in March of 1943 compelled King to transfer sixty very-long-range B-24 “Liberator” aircraft from the Pacific to the Atlantic, the Allies at last closed the mid-ocean air gap in which Dönitz's submarines had done their worst damage.

Now it was the German submariners' turn to quail. Aided by aerial reconnaissance along with improved shipborne radar and sonar, the naval escorts began to scour the submarines from the sea. Forty-three died in May of 1943 alone—nearly twice the rate at which they could be replaced. When Dönitz radioed to one U-boat commander after another, “Report position and situation,” he more and more often waited in vain for a reply. In the Happy Time of 1942 a U-boat had enjoyed an operational life of more than a year. Now the average U-boat survived less than three months. Dönitz's orders to sail had become virtual death sentences. Overall, the German submarine service lost more than 25,000 crew members to death and another 5,000 to capture: a 75 percent casualty rate that exceeded the losses of any other service arm in any nation. Faced with such relentless winnowing of his ranks, Dönitz ordered all but a handful of his U-boats out of the North Atlantic on May 24, 1943. “We had lost the Battle of

the Atlantic,” he later wrote. In the next four months sixty-two convoys comprising 3,546 merchant vessels crossed the Atlantic without the loss of a single ship.

LEYTE GULF: THE LARGEST NAVAL BATTLE IN HISTORY

BY 1944 the enormous productive apparatus of the U.S. economy was pouring out war munitions in overwhelming volume. The abundance of resources made possible not only the invasion of Europe on D-Day, June 6, but two distinct offensives against Japan: an assault by MacArthur in the southwestern Pacific, up the northern New Guinea shore toward the Philippines, and a thrust by



William F. Halsey



Thomas C. Kinkaid

Nimitz across the Central Pacific, through the Gilberts, the Marshalls, the Carolines, and the Marianas.

Underlying the Central Pacific drive was the Navy's old Orange Plan, which had envisioned a decisive battle against the Imperial Japanese Navy in the western Pacific. To that end the Navy assembled a stupendous flotilla whose fighting heart was composed of fourteen or more “Essex-class” carriers, each of them a nearly 900-foot-long floating airfield with a 3,000-man crew and embarking up to a hundred aircraft. Somewhat confusingly designated Task Force 38, or Third Fleet, when commanded by the impulsive, charismatic Admiral William F. “Bull” Halsey, and Task Force 58, or Fifth Fleet, when commanded by the methodical, self-effacing Admiral Spruance, this armada wielded several times the striking power of Nagumo's force that had attacked Pearl Harbor.

On June 19, 1944, Spruance led Task Force 58 to a stunning victory in the Philippine Sea, southwest of the Mariana Islands, over a Japanese carrier force led by Vice-Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa. Known to American fliers and sailors as “The Great Marianas Turkey Shoot,” the battle cost the Japanese three fleet carriers, nearly 500 aircraft, and hundreds of irreplaceable pilots.

Nevertheless, some senior U.S. Navy commanders criticized Spruance for letting Ozawa escape with as many ships as he did, denying Spruance the right to claim that he had indeed fought the legendary decisive battle. The unsated yearn-

ing of both navies to fight that battle would have telling consequences four months later, as the Southwest Pacific and Central Pacific campaigns converged for the invasion of the Philippine Islands.

On October 20, 1944, the invasion convoys began unloading on the lightly defended beach at Leyte Gulf, in the Philippines. In a carefully arranged ritual, MacArthur walked down the ramp of a landing craft and waded ashore through the shallow surf, a moment captured in one of the war's most famous photographs. "People of the Philippines," MacArthur intoned into a waiting microphone, "I have returned. . . . The hour of your redemption is here. . . . Rally to me."

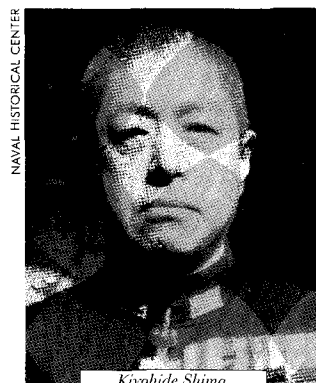
U.S. submarines had by now cut Japan's oil supply to a trickle. What little there was reached Japan from the Dutch



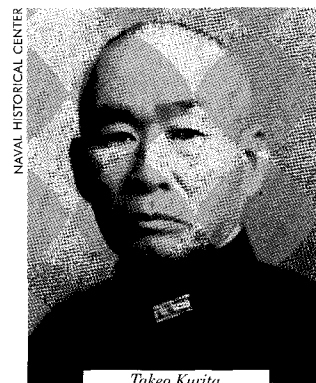
Jisaburo Ozawa



Shoji Nishimura



Kiyohide Shima



Takeo Kurita

East Indies behind a screen of islands that ran from the Philippines through Formosa and the Ryukyus. Japan had to defend the Philippines or risk seeing its lifeline to the south completely severed.

To conserve precious fuel, the Japanese navy had been forced to base nearly half its battle fleet at Lingga Roads, near Singapore and close to the East Indian oil fields. From there, and from two other fleet anchorages, three Japanese naval formations steamed toward Leyte to check the American landing. Vice-Admiral Shoji Nishimura's force left Brunei and Vice-Admiral Kiyohide Shima's column came down from the Ryukyus. The plan was to rendezvous in the Mindanao Sea and proceed together through Surigao Strait into Leyte Gulf. Vice-Admiral Takeo Kurita headed from Lingga Roads across the Palawan Passage and the Sibuyan Sea. He was to pass through San Bernardino Strait and descend on Leyte from the north just as the Nishimura-Shima force emerged out of Surigao from the west. To this already dauntingly intricate plan the Japanese added a further complication: Ozawa, his air strength reduced to just a handful of warplanes after the catastrophe in the Philippine Sea, would steam southward from Japan with his remaining aircraft carriers, using the largely planeless ships as sacrificial decoys to lure away at least part of the American force.

The Americans meanwhile brought two fleets of their own to Leyte. The Seventh Fleet, under Admiral Thomas C.

Kinkaid, was composed of several big gunships and eighteen escort carriers. The battleships and cruisers took up station off the eastern end of Surigao Strait. Kinkaid deployed his escort carriers in three groups of six, code-named Taffy 1, 2, and 3, off Samar Island on the east side of Leyte. Halsey's Third Fleet meanwhile held his big carriers off San Bernardino Strait to the north.

Six naval forces, four Japanese and two American, were converging on Leyte Gulf to fight the largest naval battle in history, a titanic clash spread over three days and 100,000 square miles of sea, engaging 282 ships and 200,000 sailors and airmen.

Nishimura's two battleships, one cruiser, and four destroyers arrived in the Mindanao Sea on October 24. Not

finding Shima, Nishimura proceeded on his own into Surigao Strait, through waters that Ferdinand Magellan had sailed in 1521. As darkness fell, American PT (patrol torpedo) boats harassed the Japanese column while it ploughed eastward, disrupting Nishimura's formation but inflicting little damage. Then five U.S. destroyers, withholding gunfire that would disclose their positions, raced down either side of the strait and loosed several volleys of torpedoes that knocked out one of the battleships and three of the destroyers. There followed a maneuver whose classic naval geometry Magellan himself would have appreciated. Arrayed in a battle line across the neck of the strait were Kinkaid's six battleships, five of them survivors of Pearl Harbor, together with four heavy and four light cruisers. Kinkaid had effortlessly "crossed the T"—the dream of every sea commander since the dawn of gun-bearing ships. Perpendicular to Kinkaid's six-, eight-, fourteen-, and sixteen-inch guns, Nishimura's truncated column lay all but naked under round after round of thundering American broadsides, while the forward-facing Japanese could bring to bear only a fraction of their ships' firepower. Firing by radar direction from a range of a dozen miles, the American battle line laid down a fearsome barrage. The Japanese formation disintegrated. The second battleship went down, the cruiser was crippled, and the lone surviving destroyer reversed course and withdrew. When the late-arriving Shima sailed into this chaotic melee

and collided with Nishimura's wallowing cruiser, he, too, decided to withdraw, but pursuing U.S. warships and planes sank three of his ships. All told, the Battle of Surigao Strait cost the Imperial Japanese Navy two battleships, three cruisers, and four destroyers. The Americans lost one PT boat, along with thirty-nine sailors killed and 114 wounded, most of them on the U.S. destroyer *Albert W. Grant*, which was caught in a murderous crossfire from both Japanese and American guns during the bedlam of the night battle.

In the pewter morning light U.S. rescue vessels crept into the strait to pick up the thousands of Japanese survivors. Most of the swimmers submerged themselves below the oil-stained surface as the Americans approached, choosing death by drowning over the shame of capture.

To the north, meanwhile, U.S. submarines had intercepted Kurita's formidable group of more than two dozen warships as they made their way across Palawan Passage on October 23. Several well-placed torpedo volleys damaged one cruiser and sank two others, including Kurita's flagship. Fished from the sea, Kurita transferred his flag to the *Yamato*. The *Yamato* and its sister ship, the *Musashi*, the biggest battleships in the world, mounted eighteen-inch guns that fired one-and-a-half-ton projectiles, far larger than anything any gun in the U.S. Navy could throw. Halsey's fliers caught Kurita again in the Sibuyan Sea on the following day and sank the supposedly impregnable *Musashi*. Land-based Japanese aircraft meanwhile attacked the Third Fleet and sent the carrier *Princeton* to the bottom.

The Americans had mauled Kurita but had not yet stopped him. Halsey was spoiling for a finish-fight. He drafted a contingency battle plan, signaling to Nimitz at Pearl Harbor that he intended to detach several ships to form a new "Task Force 34" that would stop Kurita at the mouth of San Bernardino Strait. But there was one thing wrong: Kurita's force was composed entirely of surface gunships. Where were the Japanese carriers, the great prize for which Halsey thirsted?

The answer was that they were to Halsey's north, doing their best to be discovered and tempt Halsey away from San Bernardino. When some of the Third Fleet's fliers reported at midday on October 24 that they had engaged planes with tail-hooks, unmistakably identifying them as carrier-based aircraft, Halsey was off like a greyhound after a hare. Faced with the choice of protection or pursuit, and believing erroneously that he may have already inflicted enough damage on Kurita to stop him, Halsey scarcely hesitated. He scrapped the plan to create Task Force 34 and steamed away with his entire fleet to chase the Japanese carriers. He had swallowed Ozawa's bait, leaving the door of San Bernardino Strait wide open for Kurita.

Kurita steamed through San Bernardino unopposed shortly after midnight on October 25. His depleted but still powerful force bore down on the most northerly of Kinkaid's escort-carrier squadrons, Taffy 3. A colossal mismatch en-

sued—the *Yamato* and three other battleships, along with several heavy and light cruisers, against a handful of destroyers and six escort carriers never designed for full-scale battle at sea. Slow, thinly armored, undergunned, and mostly munitioned with ordnance for tactical air support, the baby flat-tops were sitting ducks. Great green, purple, and yellow geysers erupted among them, as Japanese shells, with their telltale dye-marked bursts, scattered the surprised American ships. Taffy 3's little carriers made smoke and dove into a rain squall for further concealment, while the U.S. destroyers brazenly charged the larger and more numerous Japanese ships. The destroyer *Johnston* took so many hits from the Japanese gun batteries that one crewman compared it to "a puppy being smacked by a truck." Eventually, he said, "we were in a position where all the gallantry and guts in the world could not save us," and the order "Abandon ship" came. A swimming survivor saw a Japanese officer salute as the *Johnston* slipped beneath the surface.

Meanwhile, Kinkaid and Nimitz were frantically signaling to Halsey for help. At 10:00 A.M. on October 25 a signalman handed Halsey a message from Nimitz that was destined to become notorious: "Where Is, Repeat, Where Is Task Force 34, The World Wonders?" The last phrase, "The World Wonders," was padding, the kind of verbiage, frequently nonsensical, that was routinely inserted in encrypted messages to foil enemy cryptographers. But the decoding officer on Halsey's flagship apparently believed that the end padding in Nimitz's signal was part of the message. He typed it onto the page that was handed to the admiral. The presumed insult unnerved Halsey. He threw his hat to the deck and began to sob. An aide shook him by the shoulders and said, "What the hell's the matter with you? Pull yourself together!"

The Third Fleet's carriers continued to press the attack on Ozawa, all four of whose carriers eventually went down, including the *Zuikaku*, the last survivor from the force that had lofted the planes that opened the war at Pearl Harbor. Halsey, however, headed back to Samar with his battleship group. He was too late to relieve Kinkaid, but it scarcely mattered. Kurita, perhaps rattled by his unplanned swim in Palawan Passage, had incredibly concluded that the little scratch force of baby flat-tops desperately trying to evade him off Samar was Halsey's powerful big-carrier Task Force 38. Ironically, at about the time that Halsey was reading Nimitz's radiogram, Kurita decided to break off the attack and head back to Lingga Roads.

The epic battle of Leyte Gulf was not quite over. Even as Kurita was withdrawing, the Japanese launched a fearsome new weapon against the Taffy groups: suicide attacks by land-based kamikaze warplanes. *Kamikaze* means "Divine Wind," in a reference to the typhoon that scattered Kublai Khan's invasion fleet as it headed for Japan in the thirteenth century. Kamikaze pilots prepared for their missions with elaborate ceremonials, including ritual prayer, the composi-



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tion of farewell poems, and the presentation to each flier of a "thousand-stitch belt," a strip of cloth into which a thousand women had each sewn a stitch, symbolically uniting themselves with the pilot's ultimate sacrifice. Late in the morning of October 25 the first wave of kamikazes lashed out of the sky over Taffy 3. One headed straight for the escort carrier *St. Lô*. Disbelieving anti-aircraft gunners tried desperately to knock it down, to no avail. The plane crashed into the *St. Lô*'s flight deck and disgorged a bomb deep in the ship's interior. As sailors on nearby ships watched in horrified fascination, the *St. Lô* exploded, heeled over on its side, and sank with 114 men aboard. It was a grisly demonstration of the kind of resistance Japan was still prepared to offer.

The Battle of Leyte Gulf ended an era, but it did not end the war. The encounters at Surigao and Samar were the last of their kind. They closed an epoch of ship-to-ship gunnery duels, the standard form of naval warfare for centuries before 1944. No nation would ever again build a battleship; aircraft carriers had proved themselves the final arbiters of battle at sea. At Leyte Gulf the Japanese navy had suffered a crushing defeat, losing four carriers, three battleships, nine cruisers, a dozen destroyers, hundreds of aircraft, and thousands of sailors and pilots. But as the kamikaze raids spectacularly illustrated, Japan had not lost its will to fight.

THE WAR'S END

NOR had the United States. After brutal battles for Iwo Jima and Okinawa in the first half of 1945, battles that consumed the lives of almost 19,000 U.S. soldiers, sailors, and Marines, the Americans dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6. Eight days later the war was over.

The atomic bomb was of course the war's most revolutionary scientific invention. As it unlatched from its bomb bay on that fateful August morning, it was on its way to ending the Second World War even as it was opening a new chapter in the history of warfare. But the great nuclear blast that obliterated Hiroshima hardly represented a moral novelty by this date in the conflict. The moral rules that had long stayed warriors' hands from taking up weapons of mass destruction against civilian populations had long since been violently breached—in the Allied aerial attacks on European cities, and even more wantonly in the systematic firebombing of Japan.

On January 7, 1945, Air Force General Curtis LeMay had arrived on Guam to take charge of the 21st Bomber Command. He was a gruff, stocky man, one of the youngest generals in the Army. LeMay had led several "precision" bombing raids against military targets in Germany, but had by this time abandoned the idea of precision bombing in favor of terror attacks on civilians. "I'll tell you what war is about," he once said. "You've got to kill people, and when you've killed enough, they stop fighting."

LeMay deployed two intimidating new technologies against Japan's highly flammable cities, where most people lived in wooden houses. The first was a fiendishly efficient six-pound incendiary bomblet developed by Standard Oil chemists—the M-69 projectile, which spewed burning gelatinized gasoline that stuck to its targets and was virtually unextinguishable by conventional means. The second was the B-29 "Superfortress," an awesome specimen of American engineering prowess and mass-production techniques. LeMay had some 350 B-29s in the Marianas in January of 1945, and more were arriving constantly. They were nearly a hundred feet in length, with a 141-foot wingspan and a three-story-high tail section. They were powered by four 2,200-horsepower Wright eighteen-cylinder radial air-cooled magnesium-alloy engines, each fitted with two General Electric exhaust-driven turbo-superchargers. The B-29 carried a crew of eleven in its pressurized cabin and a bomb load of up to 20,000 pounds. It had an operational ceiling over 35,000 feet and a combat range of more than 4,000 miles. An onboard computerized central control system allowed for remote firing from its five defensive gun turrets.

LeMay set out at once to perfect the 21st Bomber Command's firebombing techniques. To enlarge bomb loads, he stripped all but the tail-turret guns from his B-29s. To avoid the recently discovered jet stream, which foiled some of his earliest raids on Japan, he trained his pilots in low-altitude attacks. He experimented with bombing patterns and with mixes of explosive and incendiary bomb loads. His goal was to create firestorms like the ones that had consumed Hamburg and Dresden, conflagrations so vast and intense that nothing could survive them—not mere fires but thermal hurricanes that killed by suffocation as well as by heat, as the flames sucked all available oxygen out of the atmosphere.

After practice runs on Kobe and on a section of Tokyo in February, LeMay launched 334 Superfortresses from the Marianas on the night of March 9. A few minutes after midnight they began to lay their clusters of M-69s over Tokyo, methodically crisscrossing the target zone to create concentric rings of fire that soon merged into a sea of flame. Rising thermal currents buffeted the mile-high B-29s and knocked them about like paper airplanes. When the raiders flew away, shortly before 4:00 A.M., they left behind them a million homeless Japanese and nearly 90,000 dead. The victims died from fire, asphyxiation, and falling buildings. Some boiled to death in superheated canals and ponds where they had sought refuge from the flames. In the next five months LeMay's bombers attacked sixty-six of Japan's largest cities, destroying 43 percent of their built-up areas. They demolished the homes of more than eight million people, killed as many as 700,000, and injured perhaps one million more. Hiroshima and Nagasaki survived to be atomic-bombed only because LeMay's superiors removed them from his target list. ☸

The Gilgul of Park Avenue

by NATHAN ENGLANDER

THE Jewish day begins in the calm of evening, when it won't shock the system with its arrival. That was when, three stars visible in the Manhattan sky and a new day fallen, Charles Morton Luger understood that he was the bearer of a Jewish soul.

Ping! Like that it came. Like a knife against a glass.

Charles Luger knew, if he knew anything at all, that a Yiddishe *ne-shama* was functioning inside him.

He was not one to engage taxicab drivers in conversation, but such a thing as this he felt obligated to share. A New York story of the first order, like a woman giving birth in an elevator, or a hot-dog vendor performing open-heart surgery with a pocketknife and a Bic pen. Was not this a rebirth in itself? It was something, he was sure. So he leaned forward in his seat, raised a fist, and knocked on the Plexiglas divider.

The driver looked into his rear-view mirror.

"Jewish," Charles said. "Jewish, here in the back."

The driver reached up and slid the partition open so that it hit its groove loudly.

"Oddly, it seems that I'm Jewish. Jewish in your cab."

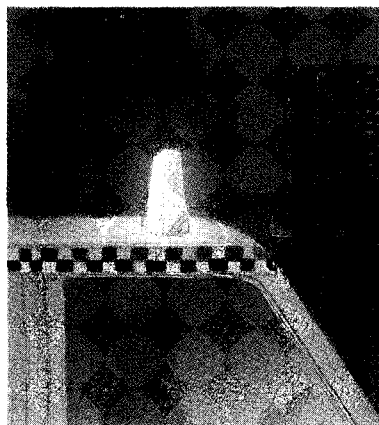
"No problem here. Meter ticks the same for all creeds." The driver pointed at the digital display.

Charles thought about it. A positive experience—or at least benign. Yes, benign. What had he expected?

He looked out the window at Park Avenue, a Jew look-

The rabbi's face
looked long and soft;
the rapture did
not return.

"No hope, Mr. Luger.
I tell you this
from one Jew to another.
There is no hope for
the pious"



ing out at the world. Colors were no brighter or darker, though he was, he admitted, already searching for someone with a beanie, a landsman who might look his way, wink, confirm what he already knew.

The cab slowed to a halt outside his building, and Petey, the doorman, stepped toward the curb. Charles removed his money clip and peeled off a fifty. He reached over the seat, holding on to the bill.

"Jewish," Charles said, pressing the fifty into the driver's hand. "Jewish right here in your cab."

CHARLES hung his coat and placed his briefcase next to the stand filled with ornate canes and umbrellas that Sue—who had carefully scouted them out around the city—would not let him touch. Sue had redone the foyer, the living room, and the dining room all in chintz, an overwhelming number of flora-and-fauna patterns, creating a vast slippery-looking expanse. Charles rushed through it to the kitchen, where

Sue was removing dinner from the refrigerator.

She read the note the maid had left, lighting burners and turning dials accordingly. Charles came up behind her. He inhaled the scent of perfume and the faint odor of cigarettes laced underneath. Sue turned, and they kissed, more passionate than friendly, which was neither an everyday occurrence nor altogether rare. She was still wearing her contacts; her eyes were a radiant blue.

"You won't believe it," Charles said, surprised to find himself elated. He was a level-headed man, not often victim to extremes of mood.

"What won't I believe?" Sue said. She separated herself from him and slipped a pan into the oven.

Sue was the art director of a glossy magazine, her professional life comparatively glamorous. The daily doings of a financial analyst, Charles felt, did not even merit polite attention. He never told her anything she wouldn't believe.

"Well, what is it, Charles?" She held a glass against the recessed ice machine in the refrigerator. "Damn," she said. Charles, at breakfast, had left it set on "crushed."

"You wouldn't believe my taxi ride," he said, suddenly aware that a person disappointed by ice chips wouldn't take well to his discovery.

"Your face," she said, noting his odd expression.

"Nothing—just remembering. A heck of a ride. A maniac. Taxi driver running lights. Up on the sidewalk."

The maid had prepared creamed chicken. When they sat down to dinner, Charles stared at his plate. Half an hour Jewish and already he felt obliged. He knew there were dietary laws, milk and meat forbidden to touch, but he didn't know if chicken was considered meat and didn't dare ask Sue and chance a confrontation—not until he'd formulated a plan. He would call Dr. Birnbaum, his psychologist, in the morning. Or maybe he'd find a rabbi. Who better to guide him in such matters?

And so, a marrano in modern times, Charles ate his chicken like a gentile—all the while a Jew in his heart.

AT work the next morning Charles got right on it. He pulled out the Yellow Pages, referenced and cross-referenced, following the "see" list throughout the phone book. More than one listing under "Zion" put him in touch with a home for the aged. "Redemption" led him further off course. Finally he came upon an organization that seemed frighteningly appropriate. For one thing, it had a number in Royal Hills, a neighborhood thick with Jews.

The listing was for the Royal Hills Mystical Jewish Reclamation Center, or, as the recorded voice said, "the R-HMJRC"—just like that, with a pause after the first "R." It was a sort of clearinghouse for the Judeo-supernatural: "Press one for messianic time clock, two for dream interpretation and counseling, three for numerology, and four for a retreat schedule." The "and four" took the wind out of his sails. A bad sign. Recordings never said "and four" and then "and five." But the message went on. A small miracle. "For all gilgulim, cases of possible reincarnation, or recovered memory, please call Rabbi Zalman Meintz at the following number."

Charles took it down, elated. This was exactly why he had moved to New York from Idaho so many years before. Exactly the reason. Because you could find anything in the Manhattan Yellow Pages. Anything. A book as thick as a cinder block.

THE R-HMJRC was a beautifully renovated Gothic-looking brownstone in the heart of Royal Hills. The front steps had been widened to the width of the building, and the whole façade of the first two floors had been torn off and replaced by a stone arch with a glass wall behind it. The entry hall was marble, and Charles was impressed. There is money in the God business, he told himself, making a mental note.

This is how it went: Standing in the middle of the marble floor, feeling the cold space, the only thing familiar being his unfamiliar self. And then it was back. *Ping!* Once again, understanding.

Only yesterday his whole life had been his life—familiar, totally his own. Something he lived in like an old wool sweater. Today: Brooklyn, an archway, white marble.

OVER here, over here. Follow my voice. Come to the light."

Charles had taken the stairs until they ended, and he entered what appeared to be an attic, slanted ceilings and dust, overflowing with attic stuff—chairs and a rocking horse, a croquet set, and boxes, everywhere boxes—as if all the remnants of the brownstone's former life had been driven upward.

"Take the path on your right. Make your way. It's possible; I got here." The speech was punctuated with something like laughter. It was vocalized joy, a happy stutter.

The path led to the front of the building and a clearing demarcated by an oriental screen. The rabbi sat in a leather armchair across from a battered couch—both clearly salvaged from the spoils that cluttered the room.

"Zalman," the man said, jumping up and shaking Charles's hand. "Rabbi Zalman Meintz."

"Charles Luger," Charles said, taking off his coat.

The couch, though it had seen brighter days, was clean. Charles had expected dust to rise when he sat. As soon as he touched the fabric, he got depressed. More chintz. Sundulled flowers crawled all over it.

"Just moved in," Zalman said. "New space. Much bigger. But haven't organized, as you can see." He pointed at specific things: a mirror, a china hutch. "Please excuse, or forgive—please excuse our appearance. More important matters come first. Very busy lately, very busy." As if to illustrate, a phone perched on a dollhouse set to ringing. "You see," Zalman said. He reached over and shut off the ringer. "Like that all day. At night, too. Busier even at night."

The surroundings didn't inspire confidence, but Zalman did. He couldn't have been much more than thirty, but he looked to Charles like a real Jew: long black beard, black suit, black hat at his side, and a nice big caricaturish nose, like Fagin's but friendlier.

"Well, then, Mr. Luger. What brings you to my lair?"

Charles was unready to talk. He turned his attention to a painted seascape on the wall. "That the Galilee?"

"Oh, no." Zalman laughed and, sitting back, crossed his legs. For the first time Charles noticed that he was sporting heavy wool socks and suede sandals. "That's Bolinas. My old stomping grounds."

"Bolinas?" Charles said. "California?"

"I see what's happening here. Very obvious." Zalman uncrossed his legs, reached out, and put a hand on Charles's knee. "Don't be shy," he said. "You've made it this far. Searched me out in a bright corner of a Brooklyn attic. If such a meeting has been ordained, which by its very nature it has been, then let's make the most of it."

"I'm Jewish," Charles said. He said it with all the force, the excitement, and the relief of any of life's great admissions. Zalman was silent. He was smiling, listening intently, and, apparently, waiting.

"Yes," he said, maintaining the smile. "And?"

"Since yesterday," Charles said. "In a cab."

"Oh," Zalman said. "Oh! Now I get it."

"It just came over me."

"Wild," Zalman said. He clapped his hands together, looked up at the ceiling, and laughed. "Miraculous."

"Unbelievable," Charles added.

"No!" Zalman said, his smile gone, a single finger held up in Charles's face. "No, it's not unbelievable. That it is not. I believe you. Knew before you said—exactly why I didn't respond. A Jew sits in front of me and tells me he's Jewish. This is no surprise. To see a man so Jewish, a person who could be my brother, who *is* my brother, tell me he has only now discovered he's Jewish—that, my friend, that is truly miraculous." During his speech he had slowly moved his finger back; now he thrust it into Charles's face anew. "But not unbelievable. I see cases of this all the time."

"Then it's possible? That it's true?"

"Already so Jewish," Zalman said with a laugh, "asking questions you've already answered. You know the truth better than I do. You're the one who came to the discovery. How do you feel?"

"Fine," Charles said. "Different but fine."

"Well, don't you think you'd be upset if it was wrong what you knew? Don't you think you'd be less than fine if this were a nightmare? Somehow suffering if you'd gone crazy?"

"Who said anything about crazy?" Charles asked. Crazy he was not.

"Did I?" Zalman said. He grabbed at his chest. "An accident, purely. Slip of the tongue. So many who come have trouble with the news at home. Their families doubt."

Charles shifted. "I haven't told her."

Zalman raised an eyebrow, turning his head to favor the accusing eye.

"A wife who doesn't know?"

"That's why I'm here. For guidance." Charles put his feet up on the couch and lay down, as at Dr. Birnbaum's. "I need

to tell her, to figure out how. I need also to know what to do. I ate milk and meat last night."

"First, history," Zalman said. He slipped off a sandal. "Your mother's not Jewish?"

"No, no one. Ever. Not that I know."

"This is also possible," Zalman said. "It may be only that your soul was at Sinai. Maybe an Egyptian slave that came along. But once the soul witnessed the miracles at Sinai, accepted there the word, well, it became a Jewish soul. Do you believe in the soul, Mr. Luger?"

"I'm beginning to."

"All I'm saying is, the soul doesn't live or die. It's not an organic thing, like the body. It is there. And it has a history."

"And mine belonged to a Jew?"

"No, no. That's exactly the point. Jew, non-Jew, doesn't matter. The body doesn't matter. It is the soul itself that is Jewish."

THEY talked for more than an hour. Zalman gave him books: *The Chosen*, *A Hedge of Roses*, and *The Code of Jewish Law*. Charles agreed to cancel his shrink appointment for the next day; Zalman would come to his office to study with him. A payment would be required, of course: a minor fee, expenses, some for charity and to ensure good luck. The money was not the important thing, Zalman assured him. The crucial thing was having a guide to help him through his transformation. And who better than Zalman, a man who had come to Judaism the same way? Miserable in Bolinas, addicted to sorrow and drugs, he was on the brink when he discovered his Jewish soul.

"And you never needed a formal conversion?" Charles asked, astounded.

"No," Zalman said. "Such things are for others, for the litigious and stiff-minded. Such rituals are not needed for those who are called by their souls."

"Tell me, then," Charles said. He spoke out of the side of his mouth, feeling confident and chummy. "Where'd you get the shtick from? You look Jewish, you talk Jewish—the authentic article. I turn Jewish and get nothing. You come from Bolinas and sound like you've never been out of Brooklyn."

"And if I had discovered I was Italian, I'd play bocce like a pro. Such is my nature, Mr. Luger. I am most open to letting take form that which is truly inside."

This was, of course, a matter of personal experience. Zalman's own. Charles's would inevitably be different. Unique. If the change was slower, then let it be so. After all, Zalman counseled, the laws were not to be devoured like bonbons but to be embraced as he was ready. Hadn't it taken him fifty-five years to learn he was Jewish? Yes, everything in good time.

"Except," Zalman said, standing up, "you must tell your wife first thing. Kosher can wait. Tefillin can wait. But there is one thing the tender soul can't bear—the sacrifice of Jewish pride."

SUE had a root canal after work. She came home late, carrying a pint of ice cream. Charles had already set the table and served dinner, on the off chance she might be able to eat.

"How was it?" he asked. He lit a candle and poured the wine. He did not tease her, did not say a word about her slurred speech or sagging face. He pretended it was a permanent injury, nerve damage, acted as if this were a business dinner and Sue a client with a crippled lip.

She approached the table and lifted the bottle. "Well, you're not leaving me, I can tell that much. You'd never have opened your precious Haut-Brion to tell me you were running off to Greece with your secretary."

"True," he said. "I'd have saved it to drink on our verandah in Mykonos."

"Glad to see," she said, standing on her toes and planting a wet and pitifully slack kiss on his cheek, "that the fantasy has already gotten that far."

"The wine's actually a feeble attempt at topic broaching."

Sue pried the top off her ice cream and placed the carton in the center of her plate. They both sat down.

"Do tell," she said.

"I'm Jewish." That easy. It was not, after all, the first time.

"Is there a punch line?" she asked. "Or am I supposed to supply one?"

He said nothing.

"Okay. Let's try it again. I'll play along. Go—give me your line."

"In the cab yesterday. I just knew. I understood, felt it for real. And—" He looked at her face, contorted, dead with anesthesia. A surreal expression in return for surreal news. "And it hasn't caused me any grief. Except for my fear of telling you. Otherwise, I actually feel sort of good about it. Different. But as if things, big things, were finally right."

"Let's get something out of the way first." She made a face, a horrible face. Charles thought maybe she was trying to bite her lip—or scowl. "Okay?"

"Shoot."

"What you're really trying to tell me is, Honey, I'm having a nervous breakdown, and this is the best way to tell you. Correct?" She plunged a spoon into the ice cream and came up with a heaping spoonful. "If it's not a nervous breakdown, I want to know if you feel like you're clinically insane."

"I didn't expect this to go smoothly," Charles said.

"You pretend that you knew I'd react badly." Sue spoke quickly and (Charles tried not to notice) drooled. "Really, though, with your tireless optimism, you thought I would smile and tell you to be Jewish. That's what you thought, Charles." She jammed her spoon back into the carton and left it buried. "Let me tell you, this time you were way off. Wrong in your heart and right in your head. It couldn't have gone smoothly. Do you know why? Do you know?"

"Why?" he asked.

"Because what you're telling me, out of the blue, out of nowhere—because what you're telling me is, inherently, crazy."

Charles nodded his head repeatedly, as if a bitter truth was confirmed. "He said you would say that."

"Who said, Charles?"

"The rabbi."

"You've started with rabbis?" She pressed at her sleeping lip.

"Of course rabbis. Who else gives advice to a Jew?"

CHARLES read the books at work the next day and filled his legal pad with notes. When his secretary buzzed with Dr. Birnbaum on the line, inquiring about the sudden cancellation, Charles, for the first time since he'd begun his treatment, \$15,000 before, did not take the doctor's call. He didn't take any calls; he was absorbed in reading *A Hedge of Roses*, the definitive guide to a healthy marriage through ritual purity, and waiting for Rabbi Zalman.

When Charles heard Zalman outside his office, he buzzed his secretary. This was a first as well. Charles never buzzed her until she had buzzed him first. A protocol governed entry to his office. Visitors should hear buzz and counterbuzz. It set a tone.

"So," Zalman said, seating himself. "Did you tell her?"

Charles placed his fountain pen back in its holder. He straightened the base with two hands. "She sort of half believes me. Enough to worry. Not enough to tear my head off. But she knows I'm not kidding. And she does think I'm crazy."

"And how do you feel?"

"Content." Charles leaned back in his swivel chair, his arms dangling over the sides. "Jewish and content. Excited. Still excited. The whole thing's ludicrous. I was one thing and now I'm another. Neither holds any real meaning. But when I discovered I was Jewish, I think I also discovered God."

"Like Abraham," Zalman said, with a worshipful look at the ceiling. "Now it's time to smash some idols." He pulled out a serious-looking book, leather-bound and gold-embossed. A book full of secrets, Charles was sure. They studied until Charles told Zalman he had to get back to work. "No fifty-minute hour here," Zalman said, blushing and taking a swipe at the psychologist. They agreed to meet daily and shook hands twice before Zalman left.

He wasn't gone long enough to have reached the elevators before Walter, the CEO, barged into Charles's office, stopping immediately inside the door.

"Who's the fiddler on the roof?" Walter said.

"Broker."

"Of what?" Walter tapped his wedding band against the nameplate on the door.

"Commodities," Charles said. "Metals."

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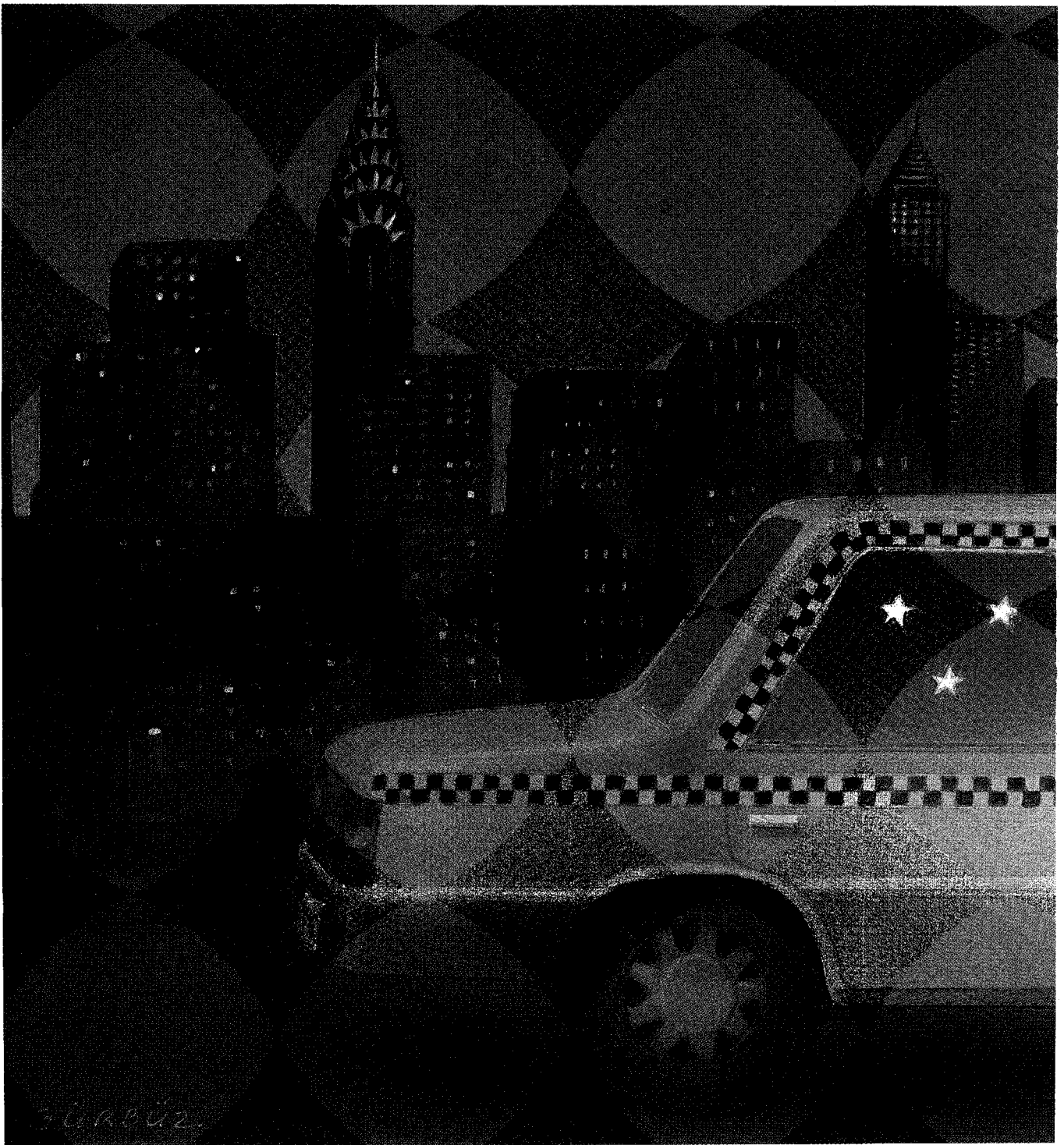
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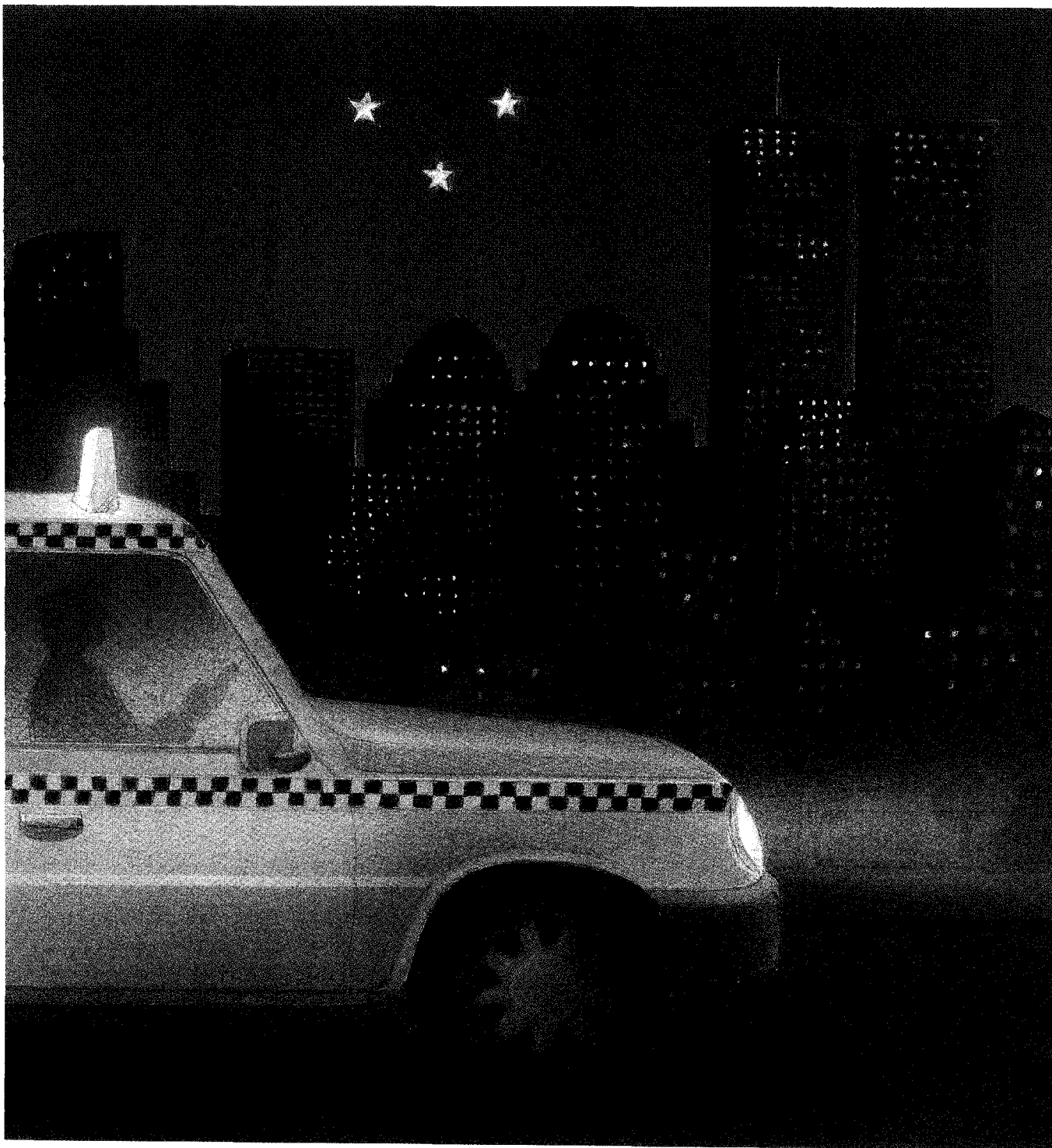
"Metals." Another tap of the ring. A knowing wink. "Promise me something, Charley. This guy tries to sell you the steel out of the Brooklyn Bridge, at least bargain with the man."

THEY had a few nights of relative quiet and a string of dinners with nonconfrontational foods, among them a risotto and then a blackened trout, a spaghetti squash with an eye-watering vegetable marinara, and—in response to a craving of Sue's—a red snapper with tomato and those

little bits of caramelized garlic that the maid did so well.

Sue had for all intents and purposes ignored Charles's admission and, mostly, ignored Charles. Charles spent his time in the study, reading the books Zalman had given him. This was how the couple functioned until the day the maid left a pot of boeuf bourguignon.

"The meat isn't kosher, and neither is the wine," Charles said, referring to the wine both in and out of his dinner. "And this bourguignon has a pound of bacon fat in it. I'm not complaining, only letting you know. Really. Bread will do me



fine.” He reached over and took a few slices from the basket.

Sue glared at him. “You’re not complaining?”

“No,” he said, and reached for the butter.

“Well, I’m complaining! I’m complaining right now!” She slammed a fist down so hard that her glass tipped over, spilling wine onto the tablecloth she loved. They both watched the tablecloth soak up the wine; the lace and the stitching fattened and swelled, the color spreading along the workmanship as if through a series of veins. Neither moved.

“Sue, your tablecloth.”

“Fuck my tablecloth,” she said.

“Oh, my.” He took a sip of water.

““Oh, my” is right. You bet, mister.” She made a noise that Charles considered to be a growl. His wife of twenty-seven years had growled at him.

“If you think I’ll ever forgive you for starting this when I was crippled with Novocain. Attacking me when I could hardly talk. If you think,” she said, “if you think I’m going to start paying twelve-fifty for a roast chicken, you are terribly, terribly wrong.”

"What is this about chickens?" Charles did not raise his voice.

"The religious lady at work. She puts in orders on Wednesday. Every week she orders the same Goddamn meal. A twelve-dollar-and-fifty-cent roast chicken." Sue shook her head. "You should have married an airline chef if you wanted kosher meals."

"Different fight, Sue. We're due for a fight, but I think you're veering toward the wrong one."

"Why don't you tell me, then?" she said. "Since all has been revealed to you, why don't you enlighten me as to the nature of the conflict?"

"Honestly, I think you're threatened. So I want you to know I still love you. You're still my wife. This should make you happy for me. I've found God."

"Exactly the problem. You didn't find our God. I'd have been good about it if you'd found *our* God—or even a less demanding one." She scanned the table again, as if to find one of his transgressions left out absentmindedly, like house keys. "Today the cheese is gone. You threw out all the cheese, Charles. How could God hate cheese?"

"A woman who thinks peaches are too suggestive for the fruit bowl could give in on a quirk or two."

"You think I don't notice what's going on—that I don't notice you making ablutions in the morning?" She dipped her napkin into her water glass. "I've been waiting for your mid-life crisis. But I expected something I could handle—a small test. An imposition. Something to rise above, to prove my love for you in a grand display of resilience. Why couldn't you have turned into a vegan? Or a liberal Democrat? Slept with your secretary for real?" She dabbed at the wine stain. "Any of those, and I would've made do."

Charles scrutinized her. "So essentially you're saying it would be okay if I changed into a West Side Jew. Like if we suddenly lived in the Apthorp."

Sue thought about it. "Well, if you have to be Jewish, why so Jewish? Why not like the Browns, in 6K? Their kid goes to Haverford. Why," she said, closing her eyes and pressing two fingers to her temple, "why do people who find religion always have to be so Goddamn extreme?"

EXTRME," Charles felt, was too extreme a word considering all he had to learn and all the laws he had yet to implement. He hadn't been to synagogue. He hadn't yet observed the Sabbath. He had only changed his diet and said a few prayers.

For this he'd been driven from his own bedroom.

Occasionally Sue sought him out, always with impeccable timing. She came into the den the first morning he donned prayer shawl and phylacteries, which even to Charles looked especially strange. The leather box and the strap twirled tightly around his arm, another box planted squarely in the center of his head. He was in the midst of the Eighteen Ben-

edictions when Sue entered, and was forced to listen to her tirade in silence.

"My Charley, always topping them all," she said, watching as he rocked back and forth, his lips moving. "I've heard of wolf men and people being possessed. I've even seen modern vampires on TV. Real people who drink blood. But this beats all." She left him and then returned with a mug of coffee in hand.

"I spoke to Dr. Birnbaum. I was going to call him myself, to see how he was dealing with your change." She blew on her coffee. "Guess what, Charley. He calls me first. Apologizes for crossing boundaries, and tells me you've stopped coming, that you won't take his calls. Oh, I say, that's because Charley's Jewish and is very busy meeting with the rabbi. He's good, your shrink. Remains calm. And then, completely deadpan, he asks me—as if it makes any difference—what kind of rabbi. I told him what you told me, word for word. The kind from Bolinas. The kind who doesn't need to be ordained, because he's been a rabbi in his past nine lives. And what, I asked him, does one man, one man himself ten generations a rabbi, what does he need with anyone's diploma?" She put the mug down on a lampstand.

"Dr. Birnbaum's coming to dinner next week. On Monday. I even ordered kosher food, paper plates, the whole deal. You'll be able to eat in your own house like a human being. An evening free of antagonism, when we can discuss this like adults. His idea. He said to order kosher food once before leaving you. So I placed an order." She smoothed down her eyebrows, waiting for a response. "You can stop your praying, Charles." She turned to leave. "Your chickens are on the way."

CHARLES had no suits left. *Shatnez*, the mixing of linen and wool, is strictly forbidden. On Zalman's recommendation, he sent his wardrobe to Royal Hills for testing and was forced to go to work the next day wearing slacks and suspenders, white shirt and tie. Walter hadn't left him alone since he'd arrived. "It ain't Friday, Charley," he said. "Casual day is only once a week." This he followed with "Why go to so much trouble, Charley? A nicely pressed bathrobe would be fine."

Charles had worked himself into a funk by the time Zalman entered his office. He'd accomplished nothing all morning.

"I am weakening," Charles said. "The revelation lasts about a second, comes and goes, a hot flash in the back of a taxi. But the headache it leaves you with, a whopper of a headache—that persists."

Zalman scratched at his nostril with a pinkie, a sort of refined form of picking. "Were you in a fraternity in college?"

"Of course," Charles said.

"Then consider this pledging. You've been tapped, given a bid, and now is the hard part before all the good stuff. Now's when you buy the letters on the sly and try them on at home in front of the mirror."

"Wonderful, Zalman. Well put. But not so simple. I've got to tell my boss something soon. And tensions have risen at home. We're having dinner on Monday, my wife and my shrink versus me. She's even ordered kosher food, trying to be friendly about it."

"Kosher food." A knee slap, a big laugh. "The first step. Doesn't sound anything but positive to me. By any chance has she gone to the ritual bath yet?"

Charles spun his chair around, looked out the window, and then slowly spun back.

"Zalman," he said, "that's a tough one. And it sort of makes me think you're not following. Sue refuses to go for a couple of reasons. One, because she hates me and our marriage is falling apart. And two, she maintains—and it's a valid point, a fairly good argument—that she's not Jewish."

"I see."

"I want you to come on Monday, Zalman. A voice of reason will come in handy after the weekend. I'm going to keep my first Shabbos. And if Sue remains true to form, I'm in for a doozy."

"Find out where the food is from. If it's really kosher catered, I'll be there."

THE clocks had not changed for the season, and Shabbos still came early. Charles put on the one suit jacket that had been deemed kosher and his coat and went home without explanation. He didn't touch the candlesticks on the mantelpiece, didn't risk raising Sue's ire. Instead he dug a pair, dented and tarnished, from a low cabinet in the overstuffed and unused butler's pantry. The maid passed, saying nothing. She took her pocketbook and the day's garbage into the service hall.

In the absence of wife or daughter, the honor of ushering in the Sabbath goes to the lone man. Charles cleared a space on the windowsill in the study and, covering his eyes before the lighted candles, made the blessing. He paused at the place where the woman is permitted to petition the Lord with wishes and private blessings and stood, palms cool against his eyes, picturing Sue.

The candles flickered next to the window, burning lopsided and fast.

Charles extended the footrest on his recliner. He closed his eyes and thought back to his first night away from home, sleeping on a mattress next to his cousin's bed. He was four or five, and his cousin, older, slept with the bedroom door shut tight, not even a crack of light from the hallway. That was the closest to this experience he could think of—the closest he could remember to losing and gaining a world.

The candles were out when Charles heard Sue pass on her way to the bedroom. He tried to come up with a topic of conversation, friendly and day-to-day. He came up with nothing, couldn't remember what they'd talked about over their life together. What had they said to each other when

nothing was pressing? What had they chatted about for twenty-seven years?

He got up and went to her.

Sue was sitting at the far window on a petite antique chair that was intended only to be admired. She held a cigarette and flicked ash into a small porcelain dish resting on her knee. In half silhouette against the electric dusk of the city, Sue appeared as relaxed as Charles had seen her since long before his revelation. He could tell, or thought he could, that she was concentrating on ignoring his presence. She would not have her moment of peace compromised.

This was his wife. A woman who, if she preferred, could pretend he was not there. A woman always able to live two realities at once. She could spend a day at work slamming down phones and storming down hallways with layouts she'd torn in half, and then come home to entertain, serve dinner, pass teacups, in a way that hushed a room.

How was he to explain his own lack of versatility? Here was a woman who lived in two realities simultaneously. How was he to make clear his struggle living in one? And how to tell the woman of two lives that he had invited over Zalman, who carried in his soul a full ten?

ON Sunday, Charles was reading a copy of Leon Uris's *QB VII* when Sue ran—truly ran—into the study and grabbed him by the arm. He was shocked and made the awkward movements of someone who is both dumbfounded and manhandled at the same time, like a tourist mistakenly seized by the police.

"Sue, what are you doing?"

"I could kill you," she said. Though smaller, she had already pulled him to his feet. He followed her to the foyer.

"What is this?" she yelled, slamming open the door.

"A mezuzah," he said. "If you mean that." He pointed at the small metal casing nailed to the doorpost. "I need it," he said. "I have to kiss it."

"Oh, my God," she said, slamming the door closed, giving the neighbors no more than a taste. "My God!" She steadied herself, putting a hand against the wall. "Well, where did it come from? It's got blue paint on it. Where does one buy a used mezuzah?"

"I don't know where to get one. I pried it off 11D with a letter opener. They don't even use it. Steve Fraiman had me in to see their Christmas tree last year. Their daughter is dating a black man."

"Are you insane? Five years on the waiting list to get into this building, and now you're vandalizing the halls. You think anyone but me will believe your cockamamie story? Oh, I'm not a Nazi, Mrs. Fraiman, just a middle-aged man who woke up a Jew."

"It happened in a cab. I didn't wake up anything."

Sue put her other hand against the wall and let her head hang.

"I've invited the rabbi," Charles said.

"You think that's going to upset me? You think I didn't know you'd drag him into this? Good, bring him. Maybe they have a double open at Bellevue."

"This is very intolerant, Sue." He reached out to touch her.

"Go back to the study," she said. "Go paw one of your books."

THEY considered the table. Charles and Sue stood at opposite ends, appraising the job the maid had done. It was admirable.

On a paper tablecloth were paper cups and plastic wine glasses with snap-on bases, patterned paper napkins that matched the pattern on the plates, plastic forks and plastic spoons, and a few other things—cheap but not disposable. Knives, for instance. The knives were real, new, wooden-handled steak knives. Sue had even gone to the trouble of finding a decent bottle of kosher wine. One bottle. The other was a blackberry. Charles wondered if the blackberry was a warning of what continued religiosity might do to the refined palate. Screw-top wine. Sugary plonk. He was going to comment, but looking again at the lavish spread, both leaves inserted into the table, the polished silver on the credenza, he reconsidered. This was more than a truce. It was an attempt to be open—or at least a request that the maid make an effort.

"Mortifying," Sue said. "Like a child's birthday party. We've got everything except for a paper donkey tacked to the wall."

"I appreciate it, Sue. I really, really do." He had sweetness in his voice, real love for the first time since he'd made his announcement.

"Eighty-eight dollars' worth of the blandest food you've ever had. The soup is inedible, pure salt. I had a spoonful and needed to take an extra high-blood-pressure pill. I'll probably die before dinner's over, and then we'll have no problems."

"More and more," Charles said, taking a yarmulke from his pocket and fastening it to his head, "more and more, you're the one who sounds like a Jew."

WHEN Charles answered the knock on the study door, he was surprised to find Zalman standing there, surprised that Sue hadn't come to get him.

"She is very nice, your wife," Zalman said. "A sensible woman, it appears."

"Appearances are important," Charles said.

Zalman brightened, and exuded joy as he did. "It will be fine," he said. He hooked Charles's arm into his own and led him down the hall.

Sue and Dr. Birnbaum—sporting a yellow sweater—were already seated. Charles sat at the head of the table, and Zalman stood behind his chair.

The most painful silence Charles had ever experienced

ensued. He was aware of his breathing, his pulse and temperature. He could feel the contents of his intestines, the blood in his head, the air settling on his eardrums, lake-smooth without sound.

Zalman spoke. "Is there a place where I can wash?" he asked.

Before eating bread, Charles knew. "Yes," Charles said. "I'll come too."

He looked at Sue as he got up. Charles knew what she was thinking. Say it, he wanted to tell her. Point it out to Dr. Birnbaum. You're right. It's true.

Ablutions.

Ablutions all the time.

RABBI Zalman made a blessing over the bread, and Dr. Birnbaum muttered, "Amen." Sue just stared. A man with a beard, a long black beard and sidelocks, was sitting in her house. Charles wanted to tell her she was staring, but he stopped himself with "Sue."

"What!" she said. "What, Charles?"

"Shall we eat?"

"Yes," Zalman said, his smile broad, his teeth bright white and Californian. "Let's eat first. We can discuss better on full stomachs." Reaching first one way and then the other, Zalman picked up a bottle and poured himself a brimming glass of blackberry wine.

They ate in a lesser but still oppressive silence. All showed it in their countenances except for Zalman, who was deeply involved in the process of eating and paused only once, to say, "Jewish name—Birnbaum," before going back to his food. The other three took turns looking from one to the other and back to their plates. They stared at Zalman when they could think of nowhere to put their eyes.

"The barley is delicious." Dr. Birnbaum smiled as if Sue had cooked the food.

"Thank you," she said, snatching the empty container from next to Zalman and heading to the kitchen for another. Dr. Birnbaum took that opportunity to broach the topic with Charles.

"I don't think it's unfair to say I was startled by your news."

"Just your everyday revelation, nothing special."

"Even so, I would have hoped you'd feel comfortable discussing it with me. After all this time."

Sue returned with a quart container of barley, the plastic top in her hand. Charles cleared his throat, and no one said a word. Sue cocked her head. A slight tilt, an inquisitive look. Had such silence ever occurred at one of her dinner parties? Had her presence ever brought conversation to an abrupt end?

She slammed the container onto the table, startling Zalman. He looked up at her and removed a bit of barley from his beard.

"I was about to explain my presence," Dr. Birnbaum said.

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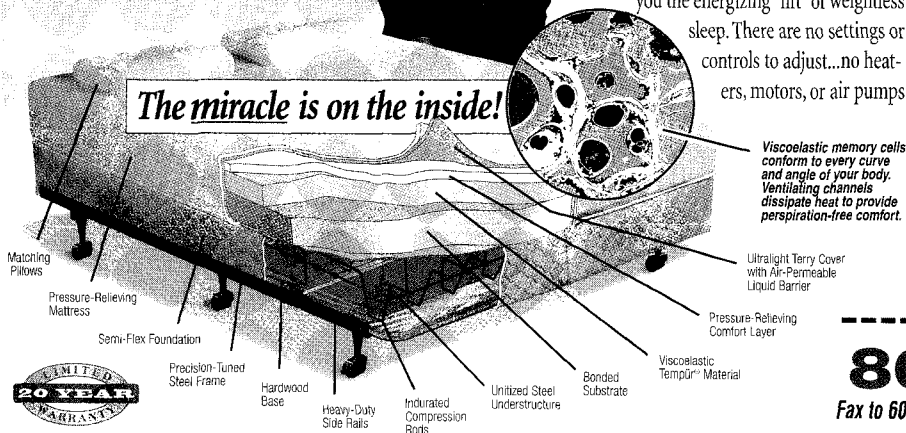
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"Let Charles know that I have no secret agenda. This isn't a competency hearing. And I'm not packing a syringe full of Thorazine."

"That was before," Sue said. "Last week, before your patient started pilfering Judaica. Before he started mortifying me in this building. Do you know that on Friday night he rode the elevator up and down like an idiot, waiting for someone to press our floor? Like a retarded child. He gets in the elevator and keeps explaining it to everyone. 'Can't press the button on my Sabbath, ha ha.' He can't ask people outright, because you're only allowed to *hint*."

"Very good," Zalman said. "A fine student."

"You," she said to Zalman. "Interloper!" And then, turning back to Dr. Birnbaum, "I heard it from old Mrs. Dallal. She's the one who pressed the button. Our poor old next-door neighbor, forced to ride the elevator with this maniac. She told me she was talking to Petey, the doorman, and couldn't figure out why the elevator door kept opening and

Charley wouldn't come out. She told me that she actually asked him, 'Do you want to come out?' Now, is that insane, Doctor, or is it not? Do sane people need to be invited out of elevators, or do they just get out on their own?"

Charles spoke first. "She turned the light off in the bathroom on Friday night. She knows I can't touch the lights. I had to go in the dark. She's being malicious."

"We are at the table, Charles. Paper plates or not. A man who holds his fork like an animal or not, we shall have some manners."

Zalman laughed out loud at Sue's insult.

"Those are manners—embarrassing a guest?" Now Charles yelled. "And a rabbi, yet."

"He, Charley, is not even Jewish. And neither are you. One need not be polite to the insane. As long as you don't hose them down, all is in good taste."

"She's malicious, Doctor. She brought you here to watch her insult me."

DOORYARD FLOWER

Because you're sick I want to bring you flowers—
unforced, neither imported nor potted,
flowers from the landscape that you love—
because it is your birthday and you're sick
I want to bring outdoors inside,
the natural and wild, picked by my hand,
but nothing is blooming here but daffodils,
archipelagic in the short green
early grass, erupted
bulbs planted decades before we came,
the edge of where a garden once was kept
extended now in a string of islands I straddle
as in a fairy tale, harvesting,
not taking the single blossom from a clump
but thinning where they're thickest, tall-stemmed
from the mother patch, dwarf to the west, most
fully opened in a blowsy whorl,
one with a pale spider luffing her thread,
one with a slow beetle chewing the lip, a few
with what seems almost a lion's face, a lion's mane,
and because there is a shadow on your lungs, your liver,
and elsewhere, hidden,
some of those with delicate green
streaks in the clown's ruff (corolla—
actually made from adapted leaves), and more

right this moment starting to unfold, I've gathered
my two fists full, I carry them like a bride,
I am bringing you the only glorious thing
in the yards and fields between my house and yours,
none of the tulips budded yet, the lilac
a sheaf of sticks, the apple trees
withheld, the birch unleaved—
it could still be winter here, were it not
for green dotted with gold, but you won't wait
for dogtoothed violets, trillium under the pines,
and who could bear azaleas, dogwood, early profuse rose
of somewhere else when you are assaulted here, early May,
not any calm narcissus, orange corona
on scalloped white, not even its slender stalk
in a fountain of leaves, no stiff cornets of the honest
jonquils, gendered parts upthrust in brass and cream:
just this common flash in anyone's yard,
scrambled cluster of petals
crayon-yellow, as in a child's drawing of the sun,
I'm bringing you a sun, a children's choir, host
of transient voices—wasn't it always
anyone's child you loved?—first bright
splash in the gray exhausted world, a feast
of the dooryard flower we call butter-and-egg.

—ELLEN BRYANT VOIGT

"If I'm supposed to put my two cents in," Dr. Birnbaum said, "I suppose now is the time."

"Two cents?" Zalman said. "What does that come out to for you—a consonant?"

"Thank you," the doctor said. "A perfect example of the inane kind of aggression that can turn a conversation into a brawl."

"It's because you're not wearing a tie," Charles said. "How can you control people without a tie?"

"I'm not trying to control anyone."

"It's true," Zalman said. "I went to a shrink for twelve years. Started in seventh grade. They don't control. They absolve. Like atheist priests. No responsibility for your actions, no one to answer to. Anarchists with advanced degrees." Zalman spoke right to the doctor. "You can't give people permission to ignore God. It is not your right."

"Sir," Dr. Birnbaum said. "Rabbi. I invite you, as Charles's spiritual adviser, to join me in trying to help the situation."

"Exactly why I'm here," Zalman said. He pushed his chair back and rested his elbows on the table. "One way to help would be to give Charles your blessing, or whatever you call it. Shrinks always say it's okay, so tell him it's okay, tell her it's okay, and then all will be better."

"I can't do that—don't, in fact, do that," the doctor said. He addressed his patient. "Should we go into another room and talk?"

"If I wanted that, I'd have come to our sessions. All the therapy in the world could not bring the simple comfort that I've found in worshipping God."

"Listen to this," Sue said. "Do you hear the kind of thing I have to endure? Palaver!" The doctor looked at Sue, raised his hand, and patted the air.

"I'm listening," he said. "I actually *do* want to hear it. But from him. That Charles has gone from Christian non-believer to Orthodox Jew is clear. It is also perplexing." He spoke in sensible rhythms. The others listened, all primed to interrupt. "I came to dinner to hear from Charles why he changed."

"Because of his soul," Zalman said, throwing his arms up in frustration. "He's always had this soul. His way of thinking has always been agreeable, but now God has let him know He wasn't pleased with the way Charley was acting."

"It's true," Charles said. "That's how it feels—like it was always in me, but now it's time for me to do God-pleasing work."

Sue didn't speak but clenched her whole body, fists and shoulders and teeth.

"And God-pleasing work is living the life of the Orthodox Jew?" The doctor was all softness. "Are you sure it might not be something else—like gardening or meditation? Have you considered philanthropy, Charley—I mean, as a for instance?"

"Do you not see what he is doing?" Zalman said. "The

sharp tongue of the philosopher." Zalman jumped to his feet, still leaning heavily on the table, which shook under his weight, though silently, devoid of the usual collection of silver and crystal and robbing him of some drama. "Tell him what the King of the Khazars told his own sharp-tongued philosopher five hundred years ago." He pointed an accusing finger. "Thy words are convincing, yet they do not correspond to what I wish to find."

"Just shut up. Would you, please?" Sue said.

"It's all right, Zalman," Charles said. Zalman sat. "That's not how I would have put it," Charles said, "but it's how I feel. You see, Doctor—with your eyes, I mean. You see how I look, how I'm acting. No different from before. Different rituals, maybe. Different foods. But the same man. Only I feel peaceful, fulfilled."

As Charles spoke, Sue slipped from her chair and slid to the floor, as might a drunk. She did not fall over but rested on her knees, interlocking her fingers and bowing her head. She rested in the traditional Christian pose of prayer. His wife, who was mortified by a white purse after Labor Day, was on her knees in front of company.

"Sue, what are you doing? Get up off the floor."

She raised her chin but kept her eyes shut.

"What?" she said. "Do you have a monopoly on God? Are you the only one who can pray?"

"Point taken. Your point is taken."

"I'm making no point," she said. "I understand now. You were as desperate as I've become. God is for the desperate. For when there is nothing left to do."

"There is always something," Zalman said. No one acknowledged him.

"There are options, Sue." Charles was perspiring through his shirt.

Sue opened her eyes and sat leaning on an arm, her legs at her side.

"No," she said. She did not cry, but all could tell that if she hit the wrong note, the wrong word, if she was in any way agitated further, she would lose her composure completely. "You don't seem to understand, Charles. Because you don't want to. But I do not have any idea what to do."

If there was one sacrifice Charles had thought she would not be able to make, it was this—to be open in front of outsiders, to look tired and overworked in front of a table set with paper plates.

"Is that what you want to hear, Charles? I'm not resigned to a Goddamn thing. I'm not going to kill you or have you committed or dragged up to the summer house for de-programming." Charles was at once relieved and frightened—for she had clearly considered her options. "But I will, Charley, be thinking and waiting. You can't stop me from that. I'm going to hope and pray. I'll even pray to your God—beg Him to make you forget Him. To cast you out."

"That's wrong, Sue." It sounded wrong.

"No, Charles. It's fair. More fair than you've been to me. You have an epiphany and want everyone else to have the same one. Well, if we did, even if it was the best, greatest, holiest thing in the world, if every person had the same one, the most you would be left with is a bright idea."

"I don't know if that's theologically sound," Zalman said, twisting the pointed ends of his beard.

"It's wonderful," the doctor said. His face was full of pride.

Charles got down on the floor and sat cross-legged in front of Sue. "What does that mean, Sue? What does it mean for me?"

"It means that your moment of grace has passed. Real or not. It's gone now. You are left with life—daily life. I'm only letting you know that as much as you worry about staying in God's favor, you should worry about staying in mine. It's like taking a new lover, Charles. You're as dizzy as a school-girl. But remember which one of us dropped into your life and which of us has been in for the long haul. *I am* going to try and stick it out. But let me warn you: as quickly as God came into your life, I might one day be gone."

"I can't live that way," Charles said.

"That is what I go to sleep hoping."

From the corner of his eye Charles caught Dr. Birnbaum trying to slip out of the room without interrupting the conversation's flow. He watched the doctor recede, backing away with quiet steps, and then turned to Sue. He turned to her and let all the resentment he felt come into his face. He let the muscles go, felt his eyelids drop and harden, spoke to her as intimately as if Zalman were not there.

"The biggest thing that ever happened to me, and you make me feel that I should have kept it to myself."

She considered. "True. It would have been better. I would much rather have found a box after you were gone—prayer books and skullcaps, used needles and women's underwear. At this point, at my age, I'd have had an easier time finding it all after you were gone."

Charles looked to Zalman, who was, like the doctor, slowly making an exit. "You're leaving me too?"

"Not as elegant as the doctor, but not so stupid as to miss when it's time to go."

"One minute," Charles said to his wife. "One minute and I'll be back," he pleaded, untucking his legs. "I'll walk him to the door. Our guest."

Charles followed the rabbi down the front hallway. Zalman put on his coat and tilted his hat forward, an extra edge against the city below.

"This is a crucial time," Charles said.

They were by the umbrella stand. Zalman pulled out a cane. He scratched at his nose with a pinkie. "It's an age-old

problem. To all the great ones tests are given. I wouldn't be surprised if the King of the Khazars faced the same one."

"What happened to the King?" Charles asked. "How does it turn out for the great ones?"

Zalman leaned the cane against the wall. "It doesn't matter. The point is they all had God. They knew in their hearts God."

Charles put a hand on Zalman's shoulder. "I'm only asking for you to tell me."

"You already know," Zalman said. The joy drained from his face. "You know but want me to lie."

"Is that so bad?"

The rabbi's face looked long and soft; the rapture did not return. "No hope, Mr. Luger. I tell you this from one Jew to another. There is no hope for the pious."

CHARLES made his way back to the table only to find Sue gone, the table clean, and the chairs in place. Could more than a minute have passed? He saw the pantry garbage can in the middle of the kitchen, the paper tablecloth sticking out the top. A disposable dinner, the dining room as if untouched.

He started toward the bedroom and stopped at the study door. Sue was standing at the window beside the tarnished candlesticks, which were fused in place where wax had run off the bases. She picked at the hardened formations, forcing her nail underneath and lifting them away from the painted wood of the sill.

"It's not sacrilegious, I hope?" She picked at the wax that ran over the silver necks in braids.

"No," Charles said. "I don't believe it is."

He crossed the room to stand beside Sue. He reached for the hand that scratched at the fine layers of wax on the sill. "So it'll stay there," he said. "So what?"

"It will ruin the paint," she said.

"It will make the window frame look real. Like someone lives in the apartment and uses this room."

Charles looked around the study, at the lamp and the bookcase, and then out the window at the buildings and the sky. He had not read far into the Bible, and still thought that God might orchestrate his rescue.

He took hold of Sue's other hand and held them both in place. He wanted her to understand that a change of magnitude had indeed occurred, but the mark it left was not great. The real difference was contained in his soul, after all.

Sue's gaze fell past him before meeting his eyes.

He tried to appear open before her, to allow Sue to observe him with the profound clarity he had only so recently come to know. Charles was desperate with willingness. He struggled to stand without judgment, to be only for Sue, to be wholly seen, wanting her to love him changed. ☼

Can of Worms

by KENNETH BROWER

Diplocardia mississippiensis is a hardy, muscular earthworm found in the Florida Panhandle and prized by fishermen. For years locals gathered and sold these earthworms with little federal interference. Now the situation has changed



Insurrection

IN the peak months of March, April, and May earthworms bring \$25 to \$28 a can to the baiters who grunt for worms in the sandy soils of Apalachicola National Forest. In the flatwoods of the Florida Panhandle baiting is not the act of threading worm on hook but an earlier step—the extraction of the worm from the ground. To “grunt”—or “scrub,” or “rub”—for worms, the baiter drives a wooden stake into the earth. The stake, carved from black gum, or cherry, or white hickory, is called a stob—a fine old word, a Medieval English survival by way of Scots dialect transplanted to the southern woods. The baiter drives in the stob one-handed, with blows from the long bar he calls his iron. Then, kneeling, he grips the iron firmly at both ends. Leaning his weight into the task, like a man planing wood, he strokes the length of the iron repeatedly and rhythmically over the top of the stob, producing a deep metallic croaking. The sound is vibrant, interrogative, lovesick, alien, like the mating call of some giant amphibian in an iron mine on Mars.

East of the Ochlockonee River, in the soft soil of Wakulla

County, the stob is huge. The baiters there—“those Sopchoppy boys,” as they are known on the other side—use a flat, heavy iron with a kind of paddle grip cut into one end. Around the little Wakulla County town of Sopchoppy heavy gear seems to work best. West of the Ochlockonee, in the firmer, more resonant soil of Liberty County, the stob is smaller, and the iron more delicate and graceful—a curving length of steel cut from the leaf spring of a car or truck. On either side of the river the technique is the same. With his iron held edge-on, the baiter knocks in his stob. Turning the iron flat side downward, he commences grunting. When he has hit the stob five or six licks, a magical thing happens. For reasons unknown to science but resonatingly clear to worms, the song of the iron drives pale legions of annelids from the safety of their tunnels. The baiter becomes a Pied Piper of worms. The finest bait in the entire South—finest, some say, on the planet—begins appearing everywhere on the surface of the ground.

When, some time ago, the National Forest Service announced an increase in the permit fee for grunting, the baiters rebelled. For many years they had been paying \$30 annually for a permit to harvest an unlimited number of worms. Hence-

forth they would be required to pay a tax of \$3.00 a can (each can holds 500 worms). A few weeks after the announcement an angry crowd of more than a hundred gathered outside the Apalachicola District Ranger Station, in the little town of Bristol. Andrew Colaninno, the district ranger, was stunned by the size of the gathering. He had underestimated the number of men and women who grunt under the longleaf pines of his district. He had completely misjudged their mood.

In announcing the fee increase, Colaninno had accomplished a kind of grunt of his own. A host of baiters appeared magically, as if out of the ground.

The mob of baiters had dwindled to about forty by the time I arrived. Among them were two old black men, one black woman, and a dark-haired woman with a trace of a harelip who looked part Native American. The rest were white folk with origins mainly in the British Isles, I would guess: Scots and Irish faces altered in some recognizable but indefinable way by several generations in the southern flatwoods. A television truck was parked at the curb. The reporter, a youngish man in a three-quarter-length leather coat, was holding a microphone up to a baiter named Charles McCranie, who seemed to be the spokesman for the group. The other baiters had formed a circle and were leaning in to hear.

"When we first heard about the increase, my wife called over here to Bristol," McCranie was saying. "They played pass the buck. They told her to call Tallahassee. So I called Tallahassee and talked to a Mr. Riser, and Mr. Riser passed the buck back to Bristol. He told me that Mr. Colaninno, the head sergeant at the work station in Bristol, he is the one that instated this rule. All by his little self. So I called back over here to Bristol. And I asked him, 'What qualifies you to set the fee? What do you know about bait harvesting? The bait business? The condition of the earthworm in the forest?'"

McCranie was a man of middle height, in his late twenties. He had an Elvis-like abundance of auburn hair that brushed the back of his collar, and his face culminated in an impressive nose. He appeared to have shaved very close that morning. The preternatural smoothness of his cheeks set him apart from the other male baiters, who tended to be stubbly. He wore a thin gold chain around his neck and a shirt of a lightweight, silky synthetic. His teeth chattered a little, partly from the thinness of his shirt in the cool of the morning, I guessed, and partly from the adrenaline of debate.

"This three-dollar-per-can cost," the reporter said. "What kind of increase is that over what is already being paid?"

"You can't . . ." McCranie began, his voice rising. "You can't . . ." He brought his indignation under control and lowered his pitch. "You can't even compute it. Until now we've paid thirty dollars for a year-round permit, an unlimited-harvest permit. *Three dollars a can!* There's no way we can afford to do that and stay in business. I mean, there's no way. Period. This is a nickel-and-dime business. You make all your profit in nickels and dimes. If you start cutting a nickel and

dime here and there, you don't make any money. Period."

The crowd of baiters murmured their assent.

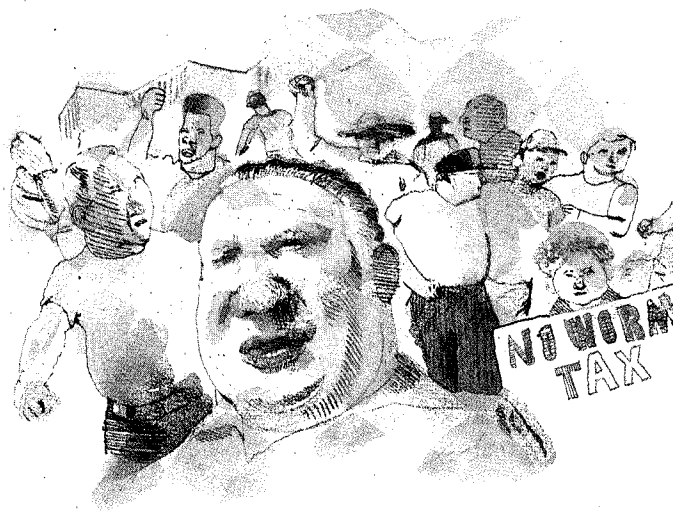
"My wife and I are buyers," McCranie went on. "We're paying twenty-five or twenty-eight dollars a can, and we're making about thirty. We end up making about two or three dollars a can. If Mr. Colaninno takes three dollars a can, that kills the bait business. Period. You can't pass that on to the consumer, because the market won't bear it. It's already high enough when they get to Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, south Florida, because there are so many middlemen along the way. What we're upset about is nobody come to us and asked us. Mr. Colaninno made his decision on his own. Nobody asked us if we thought we should put it to a vote. They just said, 'This is the way it's gonna be, and it's best for you to go along with it.' None of us can. We can't afford to. We're not going to."

The reporter and his cameraman exchanged glances. This about wraps it, their eyebrow language suggested, and the reporter allowed the microphone to drop a little from McCranie's mouth. The dip of the microphone did not go unnoticed by the baiters. Their fifteen seconds of television fame were over.

"When you say you're not going to put up with it, what do you mean?" I asked.

With a speed that surprised me, the crowd began dissolving around the videocamera and reassembling around me.

"We're not gonna pay it," McCranie answered. "We're



gonna go out anyway. Everybody here will tell you. We're gonna go as long as we want to. We're willing, just like I told Mr. Colaninno, to work with them any way they want us to. I'm willing to go with the biologists to the forest—to take 'em where I bait, and show 'em how. We're willing to do anything. We don't want to work outside the law. Like I told him, we want to be in line with the laws of the forest. We don't litter. We don't tear up fences. We don't want to be outside the law. But it's got to be something reasonable that we can all live with."

Junior Coxwell, the biggest bait buyer in Calhoun County, approached the crowd from across the street. Fifty yards away Coxwell seemed to notice the television van for the first time. He stopped abruptly, turned, and walked back the way he had come. A small, pale baiter named Raydell observed Coxwell's pirouette. Interrupting McCranie, Raydell called the crowd's attention to Coxwell's departure: "He seen the TV man here, so he left."

Raydell wore an odd little stingy-brim hat and a beard trimmed carefully along the angle of his jaw. He seemed to take a grim satisfaction in the defection of Junior Coxwell. A few of the baiters chuckled at Coxwell's retreat, a few smiled fleeting sardonic smiles, but no one seemed to feel for Coxwell quite the animosity that Raydell felt. Charles McCranie watched the buyer's departing back without expression and then continued.

"Mr. Colaninno told me on the phone, 'We don't expect one hundred percent compliance.' I said, 'Well, you're gonna get zero percent compliance.'" McCranie seemed offended that Colaninno should expect a certain amount of lawbreaking by the baiters. The new fee was all about revenue for the Forest Service, in McCranie's opinion. "There's no doubt in my mind that the population has declined," he said. "You can ask anybody that's baited all their life. When they were little kids, it was nothing to get a thousand or fifteen hundred worms to the grunt. Now you hardly ever see that many. But we don't want to exterminate the earthworm. This is our livelihood." The real threat, McCranie suggested, came less from baiters than from the Forest Service itself. If anything had the potential to exterminate the worm, it would be the agency's prescribed burning in short cycles. Here Raydell leaned in to agree fervently.

"They're hurting earthworms just as bad as we are!" Raydell cried. "The gov'ment!" Raydell's gaunt face had gone rigid with anger, and his jaw muscle squirmed, vermiculate, inside the angle of his beard.

"We bait on the burns," McCranie explained. "We all can bait on the grass, too, but we like to stay on those burns. It's easier for us. We can see the worms better. When they burn a piece of property every two or three years, they need to close it—because everybody goes there and baits it. In springtime there might be a thousand people on that burn in one morning. In three or four days the baiters have harvested the vast majority of the worms that's on it. If the Forest Service burns that same piece of property again within two or three years, those earthworms haven't had time to raise back. They haven't had time to reproduce and repopulate that area. Then it gets hit again, so there's hardly any left. What the Forest Service has got to do is wait five or ten years between burns. If they do burn a piece of property every three years, they got to close it. And when they close it, they're gonna have to put somebody there to set on it. They need to post it and enforce it, or somebody's gonna bait it."

Annette McCranie, listening to her husband hold forth, smiled and shook her head. "They could of had this meeting with just Chuck," she said. "He ain't gonna shut up."

"I don't want him to shut up," said one of the black men, a seventy-five-year-old baiter named Charlie Williams.

"He's good at talking, ain't he?" Annette McCranie said.

"Yeah," Williams said. "I don't want anybody to shut him up."

The crowd generated a peculiar electricity. In the faces I thought I could detect a new euphoria in combat with an old fatalism. This morning appeared to have been an awakening. The baiters were all acquaintances, yet they seemed only now to have realized their fraternity—to have sensed that they had a collective power. Today felt like the beginning of something, yet at the same time it was anachronistic—a scene from the 1930s, something out of Steinbeck. "There are thousands of us," McCranie said. "There was probably a hundred here this morning, but that's a drop in the bucket. All of us baiters, whether we buy bait, sell bait, or whatever, we all need to be together on this thing."

The TV reporter and cameraman were long gone, having entered the ranger station to record the Forest Service's side of the story. Reluctantly the crowd of baiters began to break up. Men would start off and then sidle back to hear some more. Four or five were talkers, the rest listeners.

"Well, I'm gonna leave, y'all," Charlie Williams announced finally. "I'm going on."

"All right, I'll give you a call," McCranie said. "Let me get your phone number, Charlie."

After an exchange of numbers, Williams and McCranie shook hands warmly and then embraced. A general search for pens and slips of paper and a scribbling of phone numbers followed. I lost several sheets of my notebook to the cause. Everyone promised to keep in touch. In his enthusiasm, Charlie Williams threw his big black arm around the narrow shoulders of Raydell, the angry white baiter in the stingy-brim hat. Raydell stiffened visibly in his grasp.

In the dry forests of the Far West, insurrections against the Forest Service and other land-stewardship agencies

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ENCE OF WORMS
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BURROWS.

have been collectively called the Sagebrush Rebellion. The Apalachicola is subtropical forest, completely devoid of sage. Some other emblematic plant was needed. Maybe what had rung out this morning, I decided, was the first shot of the Palmetto Rebellion.

Twelve Hearts of Mississippi

ANDREW Colaninno, the district ranger, sat on the edge of his desk facing the press, such as it was—the TV reporter, his cameraman, and me. Colaninno was a scaled-down version of a big, bearish, bearded type that is common in the Forest Service. He stood about five feet seven, more a yearling black bear than an Alaskan brown bear. His close-cropped beard was somewhat more grizzled, perhaps, than one would expect in a man of forty-three. Colaninno was explaining the formula by which he had arrived at his \$3.00-a-can tax on worms.

“When we sell timber, we use exactly the same procedure. We say, ‘What’s the price of lumber FOB at the mill? What’s the cost of felling, what’s the cost of skidding, what’s the cost of transportation?’ The price of the timber minus those costs, which is called the stumpage price in forestry, is the basis for the fee charged. We would use that procedure regardless of what we sold—whether it was deer moss, or palmetto berries, or any other minor product that we might sell off the forest.”

I could detect no trace of southern drawl in the ranger’s accent. Colaninno was born well above the Mason-Dixon line, in the Bronx, yet I heard no Bronx nasalities either. He spent most of his childhood in southern Florida and his adulthood in national forests across the nation. He spoke in the regionless inflections of a television news anchor.

“What other forest do they do this in—harvest earthworms?” the reporter asked.

“We’re the only one, as far as we know. So you can understand our dilemma. I’m a forester, and I have a degree in silviculture—how trees grow, the ecology of trees. I never had a course in earthworms. Everything I know about earthworms I’ve learned in the four years I’ve been in this district. I’ve learned by working very closely with earthworm researchers from the University of Georgia. We make an annual pilgrimage up there to Athens and spend three or four days. They share data. It’s like an intensive short course in earthworms.”

Colaninno gave us an abbreviated version of that short course. We learned that the bait marketed all over the eastern United States in small plastic cups labeled EARTHWORMS is not a single species but many. Some are red worms grown commercially in sawdust or horse manure. Others are night crawlers harvested from the wild in various ways, often by electroshocking. Fishermen generally favor night crawlers over red worms, and they prefer the worms of Apalachicola to anything else that crawls. “The species

of worm here is called *Diplocardia mississippiensis*,” Colaninno said.

The reporter laughed merrily. “I don’t think anybody can get *that* one out on the air,” he said.

Colaninno smiled, but I found myself irritated that the worm’s scientific name should seem somehow comic, or beyond the reach of a television audience. *Diplocardia mississippiensis* was a noble, euphonious name, in my opinion—“Twin-heart of Mississippi,” if my translation was right.

“Diplocardia would mean two hearts,” I said. “Double hearts.”

“It means twelve hearts,” Colaninno replied. “What it means is they have two hearts per segment. There are six segments that have hearts. The worms are hermaphroditic. They have both sexes on the same worm. They choose their sex based on population dynamics that aren’t very well understood right now. We do know that they play an important role in calcium cycling. They have a gland in them, the calciferous gland, that sucks calcium out of the environment. Little nodules of calcium form in this gland and then go to the gizzard and help grind up food. Where chickens eat pebbles as millstones for their gizzards, these guys—the worms—make their own pebbles. Their excrement is four or five hundred times richer in calcium than the surrounding soil. That calcium is very important in the ecology of this area, because the soils here are so poor in nutrients.”

Earlier, Charles McCranie had asked rhetorically what Colaninno knew about earthworms. As it happened, he knew quite a bit.

“We’re trying to get a major study off the ground,” Colaninno went on. “A six-year study of red-cockaded woodpeckers that will either confirm or refute a link between woodpecker success and earthworm abundance. Woodpeckers need calcium to make eggs. One hypothesis holds that the availability of calcium in the environment directly influences how many eggs a given female woodpecker lays. If earthworms fix calcium—and right now it appears they are the major fixers of calcium here—then the number of earthworms you have may be directly related to the number of woodpeckers you have.”

Colaninno also told us that regulations put in place to implement the National Forest Management Act of 1976 require the Forest Service to safeguard forest resources. “Can you imagine how the baiters would react,” Colaninno asked, “if a court order directed me to issue no further permits because we were threatening the viability of the species? They’d be shit out of luck. They could go complain to Congress until they were purple and it wouldn’t make a damn bit of difference. We’ve been working behind the scenes to keep them in business. When you hear rumors that we’re trying to drive them *out* of business, that’s just crowd talk.

“Unfortunately, we could not go to the earthworm community, badly organized as it is, and say, ‘Listen, we’ve been working for four years, we spent thirty-five thousand dollars

of our own money, and we've got an NSF grant for a hundred and fifty thousand, all to keep your industry in business.' We don't have any intention of jeopardizing their livelihood. But we're getting so much pressure to receive a fair return, a businesslike return, on anything that we sell off the national forests that the permit fee is going to have to go up."

"It really is a can of worms," the reporter said.

Grunt

AT six in the morning Charles McCranie's Toyota truck swung off the highway, its headlights illuminating the curtains of my room in the Snowbird Motel, the only inn in Bristol. I climbed into McCranie's cab. We drove to a Bristol convenience store, where McCranie bought soft drinks and ice for his cooler. We waited a few minutes for his nineteen-year-old stepson, Eddie Lee, who was to join us grunting that morning. When Eddie showed up in his own Toyota, we set off in a two-truck convoy for the forest.

"This is good weather for baiting," McCranie told me. "Moist and warm. Seems like there's something about the leading edge of a front. Any other organism—fish, game, everything—seems to be real active before a big storm. Bait's the same way. They come up easier and they come up more. Most of us believe a worm is affected by a lot of different things, atmospheric pressure being one of 'em. I'm sure that he is. He's a very sensitive little animal. I mean, he's nothing



but tissue. And he's the easiest thing in the world to kill."

We followed Eddie Lee's red taillights down long straightaways through the darkness of the forest. No headlights came at us from the other direction. We overtook no unknown taillights. The Apalachicola was all ours. We were the early birds after the worms this morning.

"They's a lot to baiting," McCranie said. "It takes a long time to learn a little bit about it. That's why Mr. Colaninno didn't understand, first of all, the kind of people he's dealing with. We're all real independent. We set our own hours. We

don't work with a boss. I've worked in the bait business and nothing else for the past five years. My wife and the rest of her family have done it forever. My brother-in-law, Ruben Hill, was the one who first took me out. I love it. I wouldn't do anything else. It's the quiet, and the solitude, and the peace down here. A lot of it is the game—trying to elude everybody, hide from everybody. It's the hunt. It's the let's-find-the-worm game. It's going to the right place at the right time. Knowing how to hide your track. Knowing how to hide your truck. Because I'm just not gonna be where there's a big crowd. They catch you getting some worms, you know, the blacks, and people from Sopchoppy, and they'll just surround you. If they ever catch you."

We spoke of the demonstration in front of the ranger station, and I reminded McCranie of his performance there. If he wasn't careful, I suggested, he might wind up an organizer. He grimaced but did not seem entirely opposed to the idea. He took a sip of coffee.

"We're gonna have to form some kind of loose confederation and kind of hang together," he said. "And be aware of what's going on in the forestry department, and what's going on in Congress."

Some miles into the forest we left the pavement for a dirt road, left the road for a double tire track across the black ash of a prescribed burn, and finally pioneered a track across the charred ground. It was still dark when McCranie stopped the truck. Dawn showed in the sky, a pale light in the canopy of longleaf pines, but night persisted on the forest floor. So it goes in any forest, of course, but here the lag time was exceptionally long, owing to the carbonization of the burn. The charcoal-blackness of the forest floor swallowed light. It was difficult to make out details. Eddie Lee walked toward us from his truck like Claude Rains in *The Invisible Man*. His jeans were out at the knees, frayed from constant kneeling to grunt, and his white cotton long johns showed through. There was nothing to see of Eddie but cotton kneecaps in motion, aglimmer.

The burn smelled acrid and clean and wonderful. Burned land should smell sad, I thought, but the scent of these flatwoods was pungent and exciting. Maybe this burn smelled "good" from species memory. The torch was one of our earliest tools; the prescribed burn is a prescription as old as humanity. *Homo-pyro* we might have called ourselves.

McCranie took up his iron and selected a couple of stobs from the back of his truck. He generally carries fifteen to twenty stobs into the field. A few of these are new, and being tested. Some stobs prove to be duds, resonating at an ineffectual frequency. A baiter cannot tell bad stobs by ear, but the worms will inform him immediately: they refuse to come up. If some stobs are duds, then others are Stradivariuses, causing the entire audience of worms to rise thrilled from their burrows. The effectiveness of any given stob varies, too, with the firmness and wetness of the soil. For all these

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reasons McCranie likes to have a wide selection. He took up a flashlight, a bait can, and his iron.

On finding a spot he liked, McCranie drove the first stob in and then knocked in the second alongside it.

Many baiters use a single big stob. McCranie prefers two smaller ones. The pressure of grunting drives a stob slowly down until it is buried too deep to vibrate properly. McCranie has found that two little stobs sink more slowly than a single big one, and thus are easier to knock out when it is time to find a new spot. McCranie knelt and, planting one knee against the nearer stob to firm up its vibration, commenced grunting. Standing about eight feet from the singing stobs, I felt my boots tingle with each grunt. After four or five, worms began appearing. One moment I saw only the black of the burn, and

the next moment the pallid lines of worms were everywhere.

Some distance away Eddie Lee began his grunt. The croaking now resounded in counterpoint—first McCranie's call, then Eddie's answer. Occasionally came a reversal, a kind of syncopation as Eddie croaked and McCranie answered. In duet the baiters sounded otherworldly, or like very old terrestrial music: a primitive call-and-response from a time when giant salamanders ruled the earth.

The grunting rhythms and phrasings of each baiter in the Apalachicola are unique. Charles McCranie knows his stepson's grunt as well as any mother seal knows the bleat of her pup. He could recognize the iron-on-stob "voice" of his mentor, Ruben Hill, a mile away. He remembers the voices of most of the baiters he has ever crewed with, and their distant croaking will bring a small, involuntary smile. He can still recollect the alien, Wakulla County grunt of a big old Sopchoppy boy, blond and burly, with whom he once nearly came to blows in the woods. The Sopchoppy boy had threatened to shoot him. He has heard that grunt several times since, and it causes his hackles to rise.

On emerging, that morning's worms lay long and straight on the surface. It was as if they found in linearity some relief from the low-frequency waves of the stobs' vibration. They did not curl and twist until McCranie dropped his iron and

we began to pick them up. At the touch of our fingers they came out of their trance and squirmed.

We retrieved all the keepers we could see within a radius of thirty feet from the stob, leaving only baby worms that were too thin for a hook. McCranie knocked his stobs loose, and we walked on, looking for a new spot. By the time he began a second grunt, not five minutes later, day had dawned in an unequivocal way. The longleaf pines were beautiful: their open crowns, sparse and irregular, with long needles in big bunches, stood in silhouette against the pearl gray of the sky.

"Any theories about why the worm comes up?" I asked.

"There's something about that vibration that tickles him," McCranie said. "It rubs him the wrong way. You can tell if you're grunting right. If you're really getting the bait to come up good, that worm will just come spoolin' out of there. That's when you're grunting like you should be."

Charles Darwin, in his book *The Formation of Vegetable Mould Through the Action of Worms, With Observations on Their Habits*, reported a common belief that "when the ground is made to tremble," earthworms think they are being pursued by a mole and leave their burrows. I asked McCranie for his opinion. Could the worms' behavior be an adaptive response to some underground danger? Was there any vibration in nature that grunting might approximate?

"The rain will beat 'em out of the ground. That's the only thing I can think it would be. And rain doesn't bring 'em up in the numbers that come up when we grunt. I've grunted up some little grubworms and stuff, so there's other things that will respond to that vibration. If I buried you in the sand up to your neck and grunted beside you, chances are you might want to come out. You felt it under your feet just now. You can imagine how it would feel to your whole body. It would give you a little shock."

Daylight had by now clarified the understory. Each longleaf pine was singed a bit at the base of the trunk, but otherwise appeared undamaged. Almost everything else in the forest had been reduced to black ash. Here and there were the blackened, pear-shaped stem tubers of palmettos. The leaf-scars on the tubers were charred. The palmetto fronds were gone, having burned all the way down to the little nubbin that botanists call the hastula—that center from which the fan of fronds radiates. It was through this inky, blasted, Hiroshima-like landscape that we hunted, stooping, for worms.

"Worm sign," Eddie said, indicating a patch of low white-sand mounds in the black ash. These sand piles, the tailings from worm burrows, were everywhere. Fire had brought out the pattern, demonstrating the industry and ubiquity of the worm. Darwin noted that in many parts of England more than ten tons of dry earth annually pass through the worms inhabiting a given acre, to be deposited on the surface. This Florida soil was poor and pale, not Darwin's dark and rich Britannic sod, yet excavation on a similar scale seemed to be

The Question of Burns

under way. I rubbed my fingertips together. They were slick with a black plaque formed of the carbon of the burn and the muscilaginousness of worms. This plaque would prove impervious to soap and water alone, but with a little elbow grease and a washrag it would come right off.

"Walk over here and I'll show you what a sandworm looks like," McCranie called. "See this worm right here? You feel of him. See how he turns just kind of mooshy?"

I picked up the sandworm, which had an unpleasant, mucous flaccidity, slimy and effete.

"When you pick him up, he'll turn kind of milky. Some people call 'em milk worms. Or rotten worms. All kinds of different names. They're zero use commercially."

"They're too soft to stay on the hook," Eddie Lee explained.

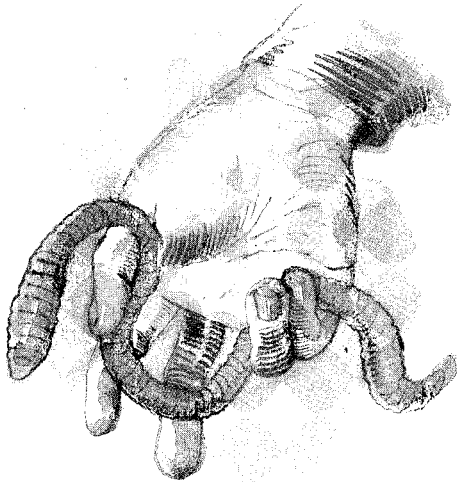
"And they won't hold up," McCranie said. "When you get 'em, you can get some big fat ones that look pretty—but when you put 'em in the can for a while, they just turn to strings—a stringy bit of nothing. Now shine your light over here, and I'll show you what a real worm feels like. Now feel this worm."

I felt.

"He's hard," McCranie offered.

"He's hard," I agreed. "Hard and firm and muscular."

McCranie liked my appraisal, and he nodded with satisfaction. "That's a real worm," he said. Dropping the real worm



into his can, he tossed the sandworm away. "That's a whole nother breed of worm, the sandworm is."

Picking up another real worm, a big one, I admired it for a moment and then held it toward McCranie. "It's an interesting animal," I said. "I mean, you can't say it's a *handsome* animal, but I almost want to say it's a handsome animal."

"Right," McCranie said. He seemed pleased with me. "It's clean. I mean, when you look at your hands, they look filthy, but that little ole worm, he looks clean. And pretty. *Clear!* Like I say, it's an honest way to make a living. It's a very honest way."

ANDREW Colaninno, dressed in his Forest Service greens, led me from the midday warmth of Florida winter into the cool of the Apalachee Restaurant. We wended our way between the tables where a few hours ago, at breakfast, the main topic of conversation had been the foolish policies of the Forest Service. Now, at lunchtime, the ranger was just another person who wanted a meal. The waitress arrived and addressed me as "honey," as she had earlier. When she departed with our order, I summarized for Colaninno the complaints I had heard here at breakfast. The biggest gripe of the morning crowd had been that the Forest Service wastes its time studying insects in the savannas.

"Yeah," Colaninno confessed. "We're studying just about any component of the ecosystem you can put a finger on. We're studying insects in the savannas. We're studying the effects of uneven-age management on RCWs—red-cockaded woodpeckers. And this is the fourth year of the study on earthworms."

I repeated Charles McCranie's complaint that the baiters should have been consulted about the change in the permit fee.

"We would have talked with them if we knew how," Colaninno answered. "I could have put an ad in the paper and said we were going to have a public meeting to talk about baiting policy. I can guarantee you that the turnout would have been zilch. These people don't read the paper. They don't pay attention to public meetings. We don't have any kind of mailing list for baiters, because we don't know who they are. The information on the permit doesn't include their address and phone number, because baiters are paranoid about being contacted by anyone from government."

I summarized McCranie's complaints about the Forest Service's burning policy: the agency burns too much, burns on too short a cycle, and is negligent in failing to close, post, and then guard its burns to prevent baiters from overharvesting them.

"Yeah, I hear what he's saying *now*," Colaninno replied. "But it's not what the baiters were saying before." Prior to the era of large-scale prescribed burning, he said, the Apalachicola had a huge arson problem—300 or 400 fires each year, many of them set by baiters. When the Forest Service posted those burns and closed them to baiting, the arson started to decline. When the agency began burning large tracts on its own, the number of arsons plummeted. "It's a very recent thing for us to hear that we're burning too much," he said. "We were hearing just the opposite a few years ago." Colaninno would love to guard posted burns, he said, but he had only two law-enforcement officers to patrol the entire forest.

Speaking of the baiters' rebellion, he said, "I was really completely surprised. Generally I try to avoid making regulations that are likely to piss off a bunch of people. There's

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personally ugly to me because I worked for the Forest Service." As for the land, he said, "I've worked in big, towering mountains. When I was on the Six Rivers, in California, you could go up into the highest peaks and see Mount Shasta off in the distance to the west. It was really beautiful. You could see why people fell in love with it. But the Apalachicola has a subtle beauty that kind of grows on you. You become attached to it. You feel more of a rhythm with it—at least I do. That may be because I grew up in the South. I have an affinity for beautiful flat wetland swamps." He laughed. "Mountains to me are so obvious."

Superworm

CHARLES McCranie handed me a stob and an iron, indicated a likely-looking spot, and suggested I have a go. I drove down, as we say in the Apalachicola. When the stob was one-third buried, I dropped to my knees in the soot of the burn and commenced grunting. My first few strokes were squeaky and pathetic. I did not lean enough weight on the iron, and it skipped over the top of the stob. If every baiter has a distinctive rhythm, mine was a stutter.

Embarrassed, I bore down harder. Suddenly my stammering stob found its voice—just the sort of stentorian, boot-

no gain in it. You waste your time. I honestly thought we had it pretty well scoped out, based on what the public had told us. When we encounter baiters in the field, we stop and talk with them. We're not quite as ignorant as the baiters claim we are."

"Did it hurt your feelings?" I asked.

He shook his head. "I don't take it personally. I've been a district ranger for about ten years of a seventeen-year career. I've had angry mobs before. There's ways of handling them and there's ways of not handling them."

Of all the communities and ecosystems in which he had worked, he liked this one best. "The folks here are willing to accept you as a neighbor," he said. "Accept you as someone working for an organization that has to make tough decisions, not as an enemy. Nobody here has ever been per-

tingling grunt I was after. I hit it four or five resonant licks, and worms began issuing from the ground. As we stooped to pick them up, McCranie and Eddie proclaimed me a natural. They made a fuss over me, as one does to encourage a child. McCranie held up one of my biggest worms.

"This is what we're looking for today," he said. "That's what the market wants this time of year—a real big, big worm that will live good. None of the buyers expect a worm that lives forever, but you have to give them a worm that holds up." He ruminated a moment over my worm. "The biggest, prettiest worms are the hardest worms to get," he said. "My pet theory about this is—well, I'm a big Darwinian. I believe in natural selection and survival of the fittest. I think that the worm that is the toughest, that can lay under the ground the longest, survives. You don't get all the worms in a given place. They don't all come up. Only the toughest, most vibration-resistant worms are left to breed. Therefore their offspring are genetically programmed to resist that vibration."

"So you baiters are selectively breeding a superworm," I suggested. "And you're selecting yourself out of business."

"Well, it's going to become harder and harder and harder over the years. That stands to reason. The worms that respond most easily and quickly are the first ones got."

Creationism is strong in his neck of the woods, McCranie conceded. Darwin is not a popular figure among his neighbors in the Florida Panhandle. Yet McCranie remains committed to Darwin's great theory. "There's no arguing against it, unless you're a complete idiot. Whatever religion you are, you have to believe in natural selection." McCranie admitted that he had not read Darwin's treatise on earthworms. "I've read some of his theories on coral reefs," he said apologetically.

The Formation of Vegetable Mould Through the Action of Worms, With Observations on Their Habits remains a current text in soil biology. "Worms do not possess any sense of hearing," Darwin wrote. "They took not the least notice of the shrill notes from a metal whistle, which was repeatedly sounded near them; nor did they of the deepest and loudest tones of a bassoon. They were indifferent to shouts, if care was taken that the breath did not strike them." Between these lines are wonderful images, I think: Darwin serenading earthworms with his bassoon, shouting at them like a drill sergeant, hailing them with face averted, so as not to offend with his breath.

Investigating the folk belief that vibration of the ground signals *Mole!* to earthworms, Darwin conducted a simple experiment: "I beat the ground in many places where worms abounded, but not one emerged. When, however, the ground is dug with a fork and is violently disturbed beneath a worm, it will often crawl quickly out of its burrow."

Darwin, then, was a baiter himself. His technique was a little crude, but he had tried his hand at grunting.

Where Darwin's worm research was pure science, Charles McCranie's is applied. As we wandered deeper into the

woods, McCranie laid out his own treatise. It was, in effect, *A Natural History of Worms and the Human Beings Who Hunt Them, With Observations on the Habits of Both*.

"They used to bait commercially in Taylor County, south of here. But the worms played out. And Calhoun County! Calhoun County was the capital for baiting in Florida, period. The whole worm business started in Calhoun County. That was the home of the worm. That's where the very prettiest, very best, ever come from. But now they have planted so many soybeans, sprayed so much pesticide, planted so many pine trees, they've exterminated the worms for commercial purposes in Calhoun County. When they couldn't bait there any longer, they moved here to Apalachicola National Forest—to Liberty County and Wakulla County."

In the Apalachicola, last stronghold of *Diplocardia mississippiensis*, the earth is sometimes so turgid with worms that they burst forth at the mere clang of the stob being hammered down. The baiter must drop his iron and begin picking up worms before he has properly started grunting at all. In the most prolific of "honeyholes," those around Sopchoppy in particular, worms sometimes completely cover the ground around the baiter, blanching earth as passenger pigeons once darkened sky. When the ground is dry and hard, worms will surface as far as thirty yards from the stob. On dry hills—or on those imperceptible rises that are called hills in the Apalachicola—the vibration of the grunt seems to carry particularly well, causing worms to rise six-



ty yards away. In wet ground the vibration is damped, and the circle of the effect is much smaller. Smut, as the baiters call the dry soot of freshly burned land, is abrasive until rain has softened it. Earthworms cannot define smut, but they know it when they feel it. To the moist skin of the worm, which serves it simultaneously as tactile, respiratory, and seismographic organs, smut evidently is a greater irritant than the vibration of the grunt, for on smutty land the baiting is terrible. "If the wind is blowing across smut, you might as well forget it," McCranie said. "You can grunt un-

til your eyeballs pop out. They won't come up." Many baiters profess to prefer baiting on grass, because it is aesthetically pleasing and the work is cleaner—but the pragmatic reality is that whenever land is burned, all the baiters in the Apalachicola fly toward it. A grunt that raises fifty worms on scorched earth is more profitable than a grunt that raises 150 worms on grass, because the baiter can retrieve those fifty worms so much faster. Many of the up to 40,000 miles that Charles McCranie puts on his truck each year are logged in search of burns. "Scouting smut," he says, "just to see what's there, for later, after it rains. The forest is a big, big place. If you just stumble around, you'll be as lost as a convict. You'll never be where you need to be."

Priestess of Worms

A YOUNG woman knelt beside her stob under the long-leaf pines, slender and graceful, with long hair as black as the burn. In the endless flatwoods, in the dimness of dawn, genuflecting raven-haired at the altar of her stob and iron, she looked like some Creek priestess of worms. She was the only beautiful baiter I had seen in the Apalachicola, but her music was bestial, echoing harsh and ogreish through the dark woods. McCranie watched her for some moments through the open window of his idling truck. She was baiting a burn where he and Eddie had baited some days ago.

"See, she's getting worms over there," McCranie said. "She knows we've baited it before. She can look there and see stob holes. But see, she's still gettin' a few."

She retrieved her worms in a desultory way, knocked out her stob, and straightened to search for a better spot.

The young woman's father was one of the men McCranie wanted to recruit for his loose confederation of baiters. McCranie's plan was to try to get all the baiters together to decide what would be a fair price for a permit, and then come back to the Forest Service with a proposal. He planned to argue, further, that disabled people and folks over sixty-two should not have to buy a bait sticker.

"The black man in the crowd the other day," he told me, "the big man, Charlie Williams, is *seventy-five years old*. And slow. Very slow. I don't see why he should even have to buy a permit. I mean, even if he goes regular, he's not gon' get very many worms. Ever. You know? And he's an old man. I think he's paid his dues to the government. I think it's his turn to draw a little bit. He's probably trying to live on a little Social Security, and a little welfare, maybe around six or seven hundred dollars a month in all. Baiting, he might make another three or four hundred. Enough to *slitiide*, you know what I mean? Just enough to slide on through."

At the same time, in McCranie's opinion, any able-bodied young baiter caught in the woods without a sticker should face serious consequences. "We've bandied about the idea that someone caught without a sticker should be kept out of

the forest for a year," he said. "The worm is a renewable resource. It's going to have to be managed that way if we're going to continue on to the future."

Epilogue

A MONTH later I called the Apalachicola District Ranger Station to learn how things had turned out. The worm controversy was close to resolution, Andrew Colaninno informed me. For the past several weeks his negotiations with the baiters had occupied about a third of his time. Those talks had just concluded.

"We had a meeting yesterday to draft a new policy."

"Complicated?"

"Actually, it's pretty simple—I think." He laughed. "Under the new policy we will issue the permit just to the person who's grunting the worms, not to the people picking them up. The guy with the steel has the permit. If the operation is so big that they have someone bringing worms to the wholesaler in a separate vehicle, then that person's going to need a permit too. This way we can control both the act of grunting and the transport of commercial quantities of worms on national forests."

A new fee structure had been devised. The baiters had accepted a higher permit fee but were adamantly opposed to a tax per can of worms, and on this they had been accommodated. The old fee of \$30 a year would be raised to \$12.50 a month, or \$150 annually for full-time baiters. For his side, Colaninno won agreement on an escalating fee schedule, which would eventually be adjusted by the Consumer Price Index rounded to the nearest dollar.

The baiters had argued for stiffer enforcement, and here, too, they had been accommodated. The higher annual permit fee would itself help to discourage illegal baiting. Because the permit would now exceed \$100 a year, a violation would be a misdemeanor, requiring a mandatory court appearance. Instead of a \$25 fine and a slap on the wrist, violators now faced a maximum penalty of \$5,000 and six months in jail. McCranie had made his pitch for the disabled and the elderly, and it had been successful, Colaninno said. "Only the guy running the steel needs to have a permit. If a person is truly elderly and truly handicapped, then that's not the job they would do. Unless the old folks are sitting out there on their hands and knees runnin' that steel, which is pretty strenuous work, they should be pretty happy."

I asked the ranger whether he had come to know McCranie any better. For largely sentimental reasons, I'd hoped the two might work out a rapprochement. I liked and admired both men, and valued what they'd taught me.

"Yeah, he's been in contact with me," the ranger said drily. "And he's pretty much in that same role as spokesman."

When I called the McCranies at home, Annette McCranie

answered the phone. Baiting season was now in full swing, and she had been up since four-thirty that morning: first on a pre-dawn drive to the woods to pick up four and a half cans of bait, and then back home to cup twenty cans. (As noted, each can contains 500 worms. Each cup contains twenty.) She sounded remarkably fresh for someone who had cupped 10,000 worms that day.

"We're very satisfied," she said of the new permit arrangement. "The only person that he's requiring to have a permit is the person who's actually using the tool. So I personally would never need another one. I just go pick up the worms." The force of law now intervening between Annette and her iron seemed to cheer her considerably. Recently she had had surgery for carpal-tunnel syndrome, brought on by a lifetime of grunting and the vibration of the stob. She was still able to grunt for a short while, but then her arm would begin to bother her, and she would have to quit. Now all temptation had been eliminated by Forest Service fiat. She would have to pay a substantial fine if she ever touched iron again and was caught.

"Things have turned around pretty much just like we wanted them," Charles McCranie said when he came to the phone. Where Annette had sounded relieved and upbeat, however, Charles sounded almost blue.

"You guys sort of won, didn't you?" I said.

"I guess. It wasn't really a win or lose thing, but we did come out like we wanted to."

I asked him if he had come to know Andrew Colaninno any better in the course of their negotiations.

"Yessir, I got to know him a little better. And I have a lot of respect for Mr. Colaninno. He has his beliefs, just like I have mine. He's willing to stand up for what he believes in, just like I am."

"Did you two learn anything from each other, do you think?"

McCranie laughed a dry, diplomatic little laugh. "He's a very intelligent man. He's very well schooled. He gave me some very good ideas. But you couldn't say we're the best of friends."

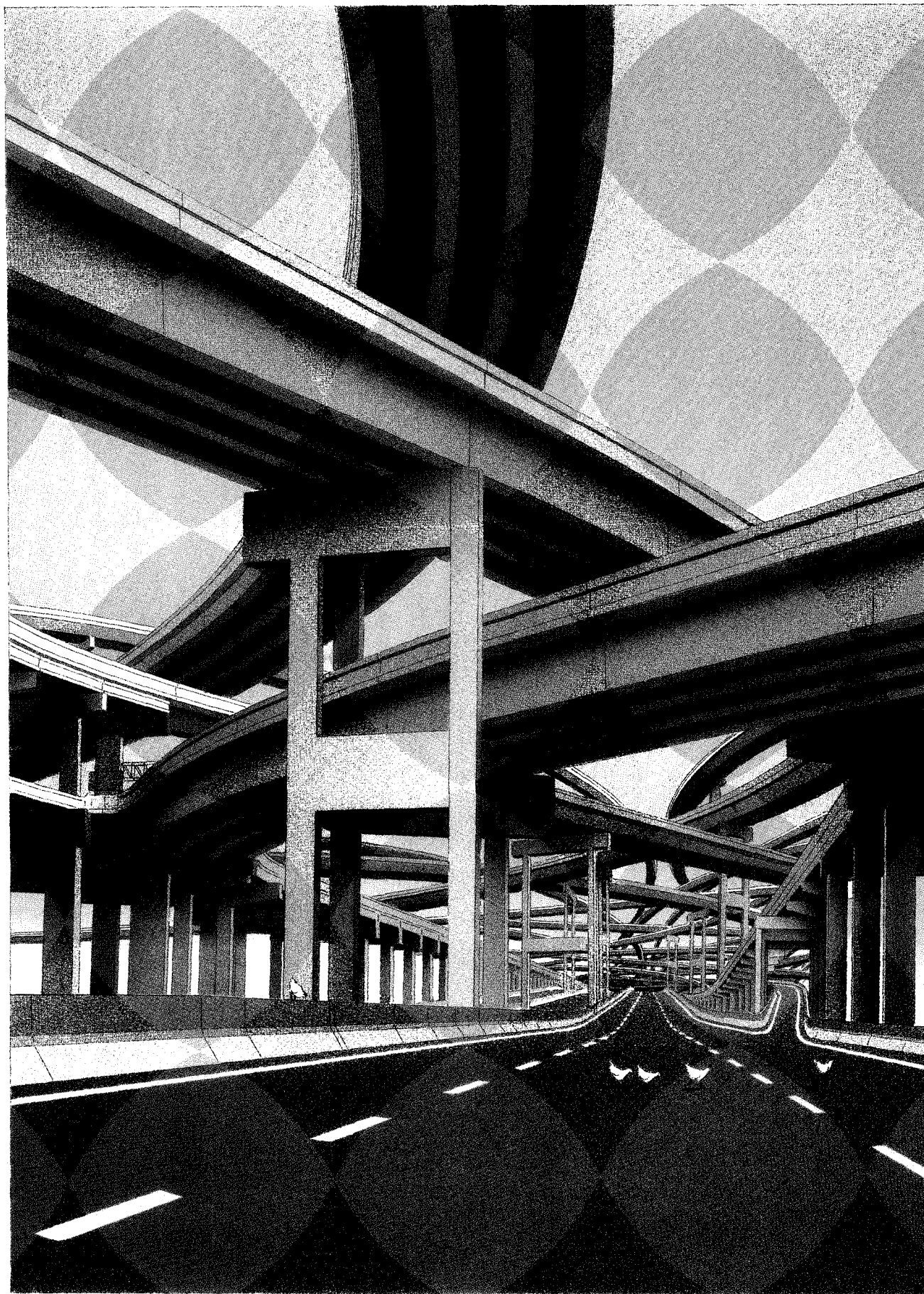
I asked if McCranie had made any progress in uniting his comrades.

"No. No. Like I tried to tell you before, it's not that kind of business."

"So there's no kind of team feeling anymore?" I asked.

"No."

This was McCranie's last word on the subject. It was just a monosyllable, but a resident of the Florida flatwoods can pack a whole hilly topography of feeling into one of those. A small wind of desolation blew through the vowel, but I heard resignation there too. McCranie had dreamed that the baiters might become a community. In his heart he had always known it would not be so. ☘





Doing Good by Eating Well

Slow Food, a group from Italy dedicated to sensual correctness, will soon be urging Americans to rediscover and protect their culinary patrimony

APPETITE can join forces with radicalism, and both sides can be the stronger and the prouder for the meeting. Or so a group originating in (where else?) Italy would have it. The message is one that many thousands of people in Italy and across Europe apparently want to hear, and that many Americans will learn about in a few months, when the group, Slow

by Corby Kummer

Food, barnstorms the United States. Slow Food combines great issues of recent decades, such as safeguarding the environment and cataloguing and preserving indigenous crops and traditional social groupings, with a distinctively nineties hedonism. It calls for "biodiversity" and "ecosingularity"—terms that could come straight from the environmental movement—but also in-

structs members to be ready for what its manifesto calls "suitable doses of guaranteed sensual pleasure and slow, long-lasting enjoyment."

This ideological stew mixes sixties idealism and the Italian love of show and bombast, along with a wish to give a socially conscious gloss to desires most people succumb to anyway. Carlo Petrini, the founder of Slow Food, first broadcast his leftist ideals in the 1970s, on a pirate radio station in his native Piedmont (home of Fiat, and thus a labor stronghold), using an American-made transmitter left over from the Korean War. Now forty-nine, he is still a tireless orator who never shies from a microphone. It was in the seventies, Petrini recently told a group of journalists, that he realized he had been impeding his own cause by denying himself pleasure. "I came to understand," he said, "that those who suffer for others do more damage to humanity than those who enjoy themselves. Pleasure is a way of being at one with yourself and others." Petrini practices what he preaches: he's a big, shag-

gy, bearded man who clearly loves to eat as much as declaim.

The catalyst for Slow Food was the announcement that a McDonald's would open in the middle of the Piazza di Spagna in Rome—an unthinkable invasion and, to Petrini, a provocation that could not be ignored. In 1986 he devised his manifesto, and representatives of fifteen countries endorsed it at a November, 1989, meeting at the Opéra-Comique, in Paris.

If the price of saving what's right with the world is doing something you like anyway, albeit with a bit more thought and effort, then Slow Food has devised a winning strategy—something Petrini lacked as a self-denying radical. What began half in jest among a group of like-minded, high-spirited friends has turned quite serious and quite large. Today Slow Food counts 65,000 members (nearly half of them Italian) in thirty-five countries, and publishes a beautifully designed quarterly magazine, *Slow*, in English, Italian, French, Spanish, and German. Its guides to Italian wines, regional food producers, and restaurants are definitive.

In the seventies and eighties any Italian with pretenses to intellectualism sported a World Wildlife Fund insignia in his or her car window. Now Slow Food wants people to adopt endangered foods the way environmentalists adopt endangered animals—only this time the means of preservation will be vigorous consumption rather than rigorous protection. It has launched the Ark Project, publicizing foods “threatened by extinction” in an effort to persuade consumers to seek them out and restaurants to serve them regularly—the idea being that market demand will spur supply. (The Web site, with Ark listings, essays from the magazine, and a membership form, is at www.slowfood.com; the phone number is 1-877-SLOWFOO.) Doing good by eating well: it's an irresistible combination.

SLOW Food demonstrated its powerful appeal last fall in Turin at a five-day food festival, trade show, and consciousness-raising jamboree called the Salone del Gusto, or Salon of Taste. I confess to having been utterly aroused by the conference—in fact, overstimulated. I was hardly alone: 126,000 visitors found their way to the convention center—formerly a Fiat factory—where

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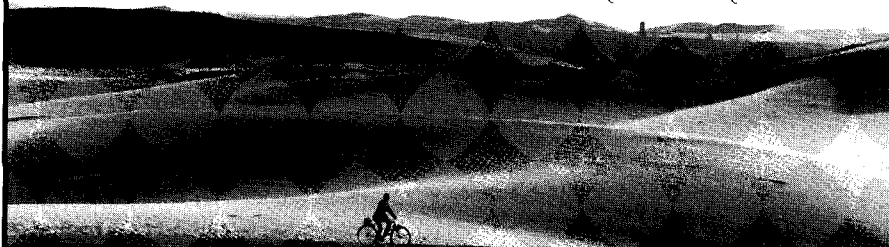
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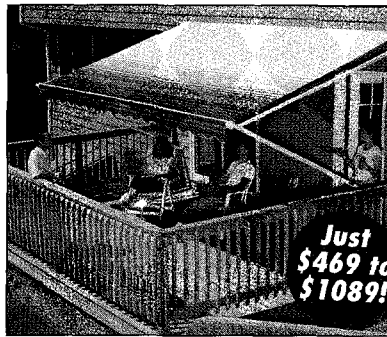
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the meeting was held. They crowded the aisles, looking for free samples and acting very concerned about the rarity of the savory or sweetmeat in question. Massimo D'Alema, Italy's Prime Minister and a Slow Food member, toured the floor with his old friend and leftist ally Petrini. At one point on Sunday afternoon ticket sales were halted, when the aisles became impassable. Lavazza, Italy's largest coffee company and a Salone sponsor, was obliged periodically to shut down the stand where it served complimentary espresso—60,000 cups in all. The stand was the spiritual center of the conference, embodying as it did the soul of Italian culture, the café, and it was sometimes stamped.

Hundreds of foods and wines competed for attention. Multiple "laboratories," or seminars, took place from early in the afternoon until late at night, nearly all of them of great interest. In one two-hour slot alone a visitor could both taste and learn about six rare mountain cheeses produced according to old traditions in the northern regions of Italy; vinegars made from vintage German wines, served on two specially created dishes; Carnaroli and Vialone Nano, the two rice varieties most prized for risotto, and their different textures when cooked; seven dried meats, cured in alpine valleys in Italy and Slovenia; dishes featuring saffron grown in Italy, Spain, Iran, India, Turkey, and Switzerland; five varieties of coppa, cured pork shoulder, from six regions spanning the length of Italy; and fish couscous, pastries filled with tuna and capers, and other Tunisian dishes, prepared by chefs flown in from Tunisia for the occasion.

It's rare that a food conference attempts to bring together food producers, cooks, and authorities from many countries. It's also rare that an Italian conference manages to run with great efficiency and to deliver on everything promised. That this conference did both might be because Turin, an industrial city in the northwestern corner of Italy, is known for efficiency. It also might be because Slow Food has caught the imagination of artisans and gourmets around the world, who turned out in force and wanted to show what they could do. Cooks and farmers came from Australia, Chile, China, Greece, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, Spain; a Palestinian delegation served a

meal jointly with its Israeli counterpart. Uniting the world seemed as simple as breaking pita bread and sipping cardamom-spiced coffee together.

Perhaps the reason for Slow Food's popularity is its aim to celebrate and preserve rather than to criticize and vanquish. Petrini tolerates the fast food that first roused him to act—or at least he claims to. "I'm against formulas of how to live in the world," he says. "If you want to eat at McDonald's, go ahead." He even thinks, rather optimistically, that a sufficient number of meals at McDonald's will turn bored diners back to the tradition of their forebears. "Taste is like an umbilical cord," he says. "We all return to our grandmothers, no matter how many detours we take along the way." *Saying, Doing, Tasting*, a recent Slow Food book, is aimed at showing elementary school teachers and parents how to teach children not only good nutrition but also the history and culture of the food they eat and the importance of sharing it with family and friends.

With enough time and enough McDonald's and the like, of course, there will be no roots to return to. The Americanization of the European Union means the homogenization of foods. Europe-wide laws of sanitation could spell ruin for many of the mountain-cheese and cured-meat producers who brought their products to the Salone. "They're insisting on two bathrooms, one for men and one for women, in *malghe*," Petrini told the journalists in outrage, referring to rural mountain dairies that are often one-man operations. Petrini compares cheese to a medieval cathedral—an irreplaceable part of cultural patrimony that took centuries to create: "I cry when I see what Stilton has come to, with pasteurized milk that kills the microbes that made that cheese great. We must create an international movement to defend microbes."

Anyone who spent time tasting the cheeses, breads, or cured meats on the exhibition floor or in the laboratories would happily come to the defense of the microbes that made them all distinctive. *Lardo di Colonnata*, for example, is fatback cured for months with salt, pepper, rosemary, and other herbs and spices in vats made of white marble from local Tuscan quarries. It melts in the mouth when eaten in paper-thin slices, leaving the mingled flavors of

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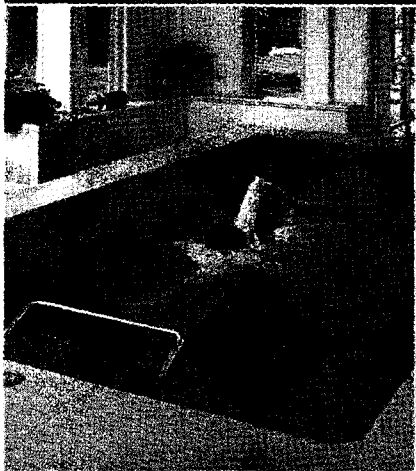
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pepper, pork, and rosemary lingering on the tongue. *Lardo di Colonnata* does not depend only on the plump pigs still raised in Italy (in contrast to the leaner pigs of America, bred to produce pale meat practically indistinguishable from veal). It depends on the winds of the Tuscan mountains, the porousness of the marble, the large-grained sea salt that melts slowly into the fat. The very air of a place—not just the soil—gives food its flavor and its particularity.

Slow Food is wary of biotechnology not to be Luddite—unlike, perhaps, a group calling itself the Animal Liberation Front, which pursues its goals by launching terrorist attacks on the food industry. (Protesting Nestlé's use of genetically manipulated products, last Christmas the group sent to a national news agency two panettoni, produced by Nestlé-owned companies, that had been injected with rat poison—causing a sudden recall of the two popular brands of cakes during the height of the selling season and a threatened shutdown of a Nestlé-owned Italian plant.) Slow Food's aim is to encourage the survival of foods imperiled because of high labor costs. A few of the products it has nominated for inclusion on its Ark are *mortadelline di Campotosto*, an egg-shaped sausage made in Abruzzo of lean pork meat with lard and strips of bacon (and no nitrites) and dried for four months near a fire; *caciocavallo podolico*, the "king of cheese from southern Italy," sharp of taste from being ripened as long as two years, and scented with wild herbs from the fields the cattle graze on; and *crema di carrube*, or carob cream, made by a very few families in Apulia and Sicily of soaked, cooked, and cracked carob beans, to be used in place of sugar. France has its own list, including oranges native to Nice, from only a few dozen century-old trees; red-violet blood peaches, or *pêche sanguine de Manosque*, from Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, nearly eliminated by frosts in the forties and fifties and by the substitution of higher-yielding varieties; and *petit épeautre*, an ancient grain related to emmer, durum, and common wheat.

Then there are the items that show the remnant desire to throw a few Molotov cocktails: *tonno di tonnara di Favignana*, from Sicily, tuna that has been bled to death and is white-fleshed and more delicate than driftnet- or line-caught tuna;

and *lattume di tonno*, tuna sperm that is layered with salt for a month, washed, dried, and served in thin slices over salad or breaded and fried. Originally used as an aphrodisiac, *lattume* is today both a delicacy and a curiosity.

This May, Slow Food will make one of its most ambitious moves so far—announcing a list of American foods to go on the Ark, as part of the cross-country tour its leaders have planned. It aims to persuade local foodies and ex-radicals to found convivia, branches that will hold tastings of local products and promote their use by restaurants and markets. Slow Food is counting on its existing convivia in California, Illinois, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Utah, and Vermont to identify products for the Ark.

It takes time to think of what qualifies as a medieval cathedral in the United States, with its relatively short history and its ever-frenzied embrace of the very latest technology, which obliterates artisan traditions. Only one American food producer, Jonathan White, of Egg Farm Dairy, in Peekskill, New York, dared rent a booth at the Salone del Gusto; White has directed the Slow Food convivium in New York. His cheeses, already well known to American connoisseurs, are obvious Ark candidates, and so are southern country hams, fruit preserves such as apple butter and cherry jam, apple cider, and New Orleans pralines. Foreign enthusiasts may inspire us to preserve our own patrimony.

ANTHROPOMORPHIC animals like pandas and koala bears make wildlife supporters get out their checkbooks. Putting a face to a food makes it come alive both in the mind and on the palate. Personal warmth can make it come alive in the heart.

Flavio and Ferdinando Marino, brothers in their forties, grind corn at the Mulino Marino in Cossano Belbo, near the truffle capital, Alba, below Turin in the hills of the Langhe. Aside from bearing names beginning with *F* (a whim of the grandfather's), the men of the Marino family have in common a belief in milling only an old variety of eight-row corn, which takes much more care to raise and has a much lower yield than modern varieties. They develop seed corn and give it to the farmers who grow it for them—a very expensive step. The

flavor is better, they insist, not to mention that the variety is close to what grew in the area for a century or more.

A visit to the mill, where the Marino brothers use millstones produced near Paris before the Second World War, and sharpen the grooves by hand with hammer and mallet, was enough to persuade me and several colleagues who discovered the family at the conference that old and slow is better (admittedly, we didn't need much persuasion). The brothers' wives, aunt, and sister served a polenta feast, featuring circles of fried polenta with creamed salt cod; bread made, shockingly, in a bread machine, but good nonetheless; and the *pièce de résistance*—two kinds of boiled polenta, coarse- and fine-ground, served with *bagna d'euv*, a tomato and tuna sauce with chopped hard-boiled eggs seasoned with parsley, garlic, and rosemary, and its hot twin, *bagna d'infern*, with anchovies in place of tuna, extra garlic, and hot pepper. The Marino polenta, even when I later cooked it in my kitchen without any of the fragrant local ingredients, was clearly superior: fresher, nuttier, fuller-flavored.

Fulvio Marino, the twelve-year-old son of Ferdinando, took over the tour of the mill and even the lunch in the big family kitchen, answering "*Si si si*"—a peculiarly Piedmontese form of emphasis—to even the most tentative question. He managed to be both officious and charmingly at ease, with the adults who crowded the long table and with the playmates his age who appeared after lunch. With his experiments on the Internet and his rapid-fire disquisitions on family history, Fulvio seems set to inherit the business, even more than his fifteen-year-old brother, Fausto.

On a long walk after a long lunch Fulvio listened intently to his grandfather's tales of escaping with his partisan comrades by way of a tunnel cut through the town wall when German soldiers thought they had the place surrounded. He pointed to the sunnier parts of the hills, which grow the best corn, and enumerated the production of the various farms, all starting from the same seed corn provided by his family. He even jokingly promised a nine-row variety in honor of the next Salone del Gusto, which is to be held in the fall of next year. Slow Food has recently nominated Marino polenta to be on the Ark. I nominate Fulvio to be Noah. ☪

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AT HOME WITH THE MARQUIS DE SADE:

A Life

by Francine du Plessix Gray.

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THE first time the Marquis de Sade went to prison, in 1763, it was under a royal *lettre de cachet* signed by Louis XV, on charges of "blasphemy and incitement to sacrilege." Thirty years later, after the Revolution, the aristocrat nearly went to the guillotine for having "corresponded with enemies of the republic." Finally, Napoleon's government put him in a mental hospital under a diagnosis of "libertine dementia," based primarily on his writings: unblinking descriptions—celebrations, really—of cannibalism, coprophagy, necrophilia, the rape and murder of children, and countless other perversions. In all, he spent twenty-eight of his seventy-four years in confinement.

Every generation has had to decide what to do with Donatien Alphonse de Sade, and since his death, in 1814, his reputation has undergone a series of dramatic turns. For the historian Jules Michelet, writing around 1850, the marquis epitomized the decadence of the *ancien régime*; yet a few years earlier the critic C. A. Sainte-Beuve had named him and Lord Byron as the two great inspirations of contemporary French literature. Flaubert, Baudelaire, and Swinburne were among the nineteenth-century writers who admired De Sade's work while it was still off limits to most readers.

In 1886 Richard von Krafft-Ebing introduced "sadism" as a pathological term, and De Sade—both the man and



his writings—became a subject for psychiatrists. The avant-garde poet Guillaume Apollinaire dubbed him "the Divine Marquis" and "the freest spirit that ever lived," and later he became a hero to the Surrealist movement. In the aftermath of the Second World War, Albert Camus condemned De Sade as a spiritual forerunner of the Fascists and the Stalinists, but Michel Foucault credited him with giving the Western world "the possibility of transcending its reason in violence." De Sade's works are now pub-

lished in the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, an honor reserved for acknowledged classics, and their prestige in academic and critical circles has never been higher.

As for De Sade himself, he has been biographically lionized by Maurice Heine and Gilbert Lely and humanized by Maurice Lever. Now Francine du Plessix Gray does something even more radical: in *At Home With the Marquis de Sade* she domesticates him. Her De Sade "detest[s] bloodshed" and fusses as much over his

cherry orchards as over the intricate choreography of his orgies; inquires about his children's manners and schooling as he sits in prison; and holds a "notably idealistic view of marriage" (meaning that he steers clear of other men's wives even as he cheats on his own). It is a portrait that the marquis, who spent most of his life seeking to shock and disturb others, would find frustrating. But then, in Gray's telling, De Sade's story is ultimately an "eloquent allegory on women's ability to tame man's nomadic sexual energies, to enforce civilization and its attendant discontents."

DE Sade was born in 1740 in Paris, in the palace of the Condé branch of the ruling Bourbon family, to which he was related through his mother. At the age of four, after the headstrong Donatien struck a prince of the blood royal during a fight over a toy, he was packed off to his father's relatives in Provence. There he came under the influence of his uncle the Abbé de Sade, a cleric who counted Voltaire among his friends, kept a mother-daughter team of mistresses, and gave his nephew the freedom of his library, which included ample pornography amid the more edifying literature.

At the age of ten the boy returned to Paris and entered the elite Jesuit school of Louis-le-Grand, where he developed what would prove lifelong passions for theater, flogging, and sodomy. Two years later his mother, long estranged from his father, retired to a Carmelite convent, and thereafter Donatien would have little contact with her. At sixteen the marquis received a commission in the army's prestigious carabineers unit, and by nineteen he had acquired a reputation as a gambler and a lothario.

Donatien's father, himself a virtuoso ladies' man but a less than successful courtier and diplomat, sought to secure the family's fortunes with a profitable match for his son. He found one in Renée-Pélagie de Montreuil, the homely daughter of a rich Paris judge. To the elder De Sade, the Montreuils' wealth more than made up for their lack of noble lineage; but the groom was less enthusiastic. Twenty-two years old and smarting from rejection by an aristocratic Provençal beauty, the young rake got over a case of gonorrhea just in time for the wedding.

Marriage hardly reined him in. Five

months later De Sade took a prostitute to lodgings he kept in Paris and locked her in an upstairs room. Did she have religion? he asked. She answered that she was a faithful Catholic, whereupon he began furiously cursing. He masturbated into a chalice and told her how he had desecrated communion hosts by using them in a carnal act. He showed her his eclectic set of sexual aids: scourges, crucifixes, religious pictures, and pornographic images. He had her whip him with a red-hot cat-o'-nine-tails. Although he hinted at threats with a sword and pistols, she refused to blaspheme along with him, or to let him whip or sodomize her. He read her some sacrilegious poetry, and when the morning came, he let her go.

Ten days later the Paris police arrested De Sade, but thanks to the influence of his family, the incarceration lasted only three weeks. His mother-in-law, Mme. de Montreuil, was a shrewd and decisive woman who knew how to handle the judicial bureaucracy, and was known as "la Présidente" because of her husband's place within it. Charmed by her son-in-law, she defended him to his blood relatives and assured them that he would reform soon.

Instead, for fifteen years the incorrigible De Sade spread his family's shame ever wider and made his own legal situation ever worse. On Easter Sunday in 1768 he pretended to hire a woman as a housekeeper: then, after threatening to "murder her and bury her in the garden," he whipped her and poured hot wax into the lacerations on her back. Four years later, in Marseilles, he organized a bisexual orgy with his valet, and fed two prostitutes an overdose of Spanish fly; that earned him a conviction in absentia for both sodomy and poisoning, for which he was decapitated and burned—both in effigy—in Aix-en-Provence. Undaunted, after more than two years as a fugitive in France and abroad, punctuated by five months in prison in Savoy, he took five adolescent girls and a boy to his ancestral home of La Coste for a winter of orgies, having them held captive until the marks on their bodies had healed. Not until August of 1778, following a shooting attempt by an irate father, another arrest, and escape, was De Sade trapped. He spent the next twelve years behind bars.

It was a sentence that Gray seems to consider unjust. Although she does not excuse De Sade's crimes, she tends to use

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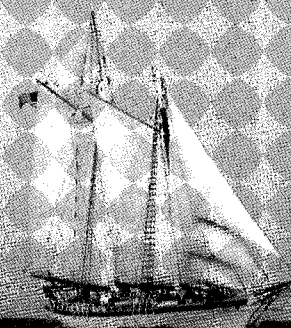
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to create that which is not now developing sufficiently robustly-- & overcome the self-confident rule of evil, mere cleverness, even mere mercy--& mad, adapted custom.

strikingly mild language to condemn them, calling his captivity and torture of six minors "scandalous antics" and "ignoble doings." As for the Spanish-fly episode, she finds it "very doubtful" that he intended to harm his victims, arguing that he was probably "sloppy" in preparing the "irresponsibly large" dosage, and notes that he was in part "a casualty of the social conflicts that continued to be played out in France"—between the crown and the *parlements*, the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie—in the years leading up to the Revolution.

Gray seems less interested in the suffering of De Sade's victims, and hardly tries to evoke the "psychic terrorism" he practiced on them. Of course, the sources are partly to blame for such bias: De Sade and his wife speak to us through their long correspondence, whereas the little people of the past are almost all mute. Yet the author, a novelist and a journalist as well as a biographer, imaginatively ventures beyond the documentary evidence to enter the minds of both marquis and marquise.

Despite her obvious sympathy for him, even De Sade eludes Gray's understanding at times. Puzzled by why he carried his "quest for pleasure" to such self-destructive lengths, she posits a combination of narcissism, delusional grandiosity, infantile anality, and exhibitionism.

Such explanations would not have interested Mme. de Montreuil. After years of protecting her son-in-law from the courts, she finally lost patience when he seduced her daughter Anne-Prospère, a twenty-year-old virgin and a canoness of the Benedictine order, whom he took with him on one of his flights to Italy. Provoked to a "primitive female fury, a rage . . . unquestioning in its self-righteousness," la Présidente thereafter dedicated herself to having De Sade locked up for good.

The marquis, who had originally carried favor with his mother-in-law (perhaps seeking, in Gray's view, the sort of affection he had missed from his own mother), vilified Mme. de Montreuil in letters to his wife, calling her "your whore of a mother," "a venomous beast," "an infernal monster," and other, less printable epithets. He later may have taken a more literary revenge. In *Philosophy in the Bedroom* (1795) a recently deflowered virgin takes part in the rape and

genital mutilation of her straitlaced mother. According to Gray,

This is one of the many moments in Sade's fiction that express the author's abhorrence of the maternal principle, of the entire process of procreation. It is tempting to surmise that this detested female is modeled on the Présidente de Montreuil, and that the book's violent ending was further fueled by his resentment of his own glacial mother.

WHILE la Présidente turned against De Sade, Pélégie only grew more tolerant of her husband's misdeeds, even when these involved her younger sister. She helped to round up warm bodies for the revels at La Coste, and may have taken part in them herself. During De Sade's twelve-year stretch in prison, first in Vincennes and later in the Bastille, she bore the insults ("you're only trying to torture me through your execrable letters") that he alternated with endearments ("celestial kitten," "star of Venus," "fresh pork of my thoughts"), and she kept him supplied with books, sweets, tailor-made clothes, and the enormous bespoke wooden dildos (to be made, he stipulated, by the same craftsman who supplied the archbishop of Lyons) with which he consoled himself for the lack of partners. Meanwhile, she lived less than half as expensively as the prisoner, selling her silver shoe buckles to support them both.

Such devotion is at once baffling and familiar, the stuff of a thousand self-help books about smart women and foolish choices. Gray, whose books include a biography of Louise Colet, the novelist and much-abused lover of Flaubert, is something of an expert on female masochism—and what better subject than the willing victim of the original sadist? Indeed, Gray first planned to write this book about the Marquise de Sade, rather than her husband, in order to plumb "the mystery of absolute passion and the mystery of absolute submission and ultimately the mystery of her own rebellion against him."

Evidently these mysteries proved unfathomable. Gray likens Pélégie's attitude to "that total surrender of self achieved only by the most perfect nuns," and declares that "her love seems to have been too exalted, too selfless" to demand something as "commonplace" as marital

fidelity. The idea is romantic, and no doubt will prove seductive to some, but it does not explain much. The author's desire to understand Pélégie's attitude leads her to suppose "a secret gentleness in [De Sade], which may well have been at the heart of his terrible charm." In identifying with the charmed, Gray herself seems to have succumbed, which would explain why at many points she sympathizes with De Sade more than a biographer's detachment should permit.

Gray does offer a more prosaic reason for the marquise's attachment, suggesting that the "initially timid, sheltered Pélégie had been sexually aroused by her husband, intensely so, and may have been further stimulated by witnessing his carousings." Naturally this stimulation would have worn off during De Sade's long incarceration (when he also grew enormously fat). After moving into a convent to appease her husband's obsessive jealousy, the marquise became increasingly pious, and inexorably drifted away from the fervent atheist she had married.

Yet among her services to the imprisoned De Sade was to smuggle out some of his decidedly impious writings. He had started writing before prison, turning out travelogues of Italy and Holland as well as pornographic works, but it took long confinement to unleash his literary energies. Drama was his greatest love, but his plays—utterly conventional in their morality—were destined for obscurity. It was his obscene fiction that would bring him immortal fame.

At the time, however, this scandalous work was a matter for the utmost secrecy. In 1785, writing in a tiny script, De Sade transcribed drafts of *The 120 Days of Sodom*—a seemingly exhaustive catalogue of ways in which the human animal might conceivably pursue sexual pleasure, especially by inflicting pain—onto four-inch-wide sheets of paper, which he glued together to make a roll almost forty feet long, small enough to hide in a hole in the wall. In this period De Sade also produced an early version of *Justine, or the Misfortunes of Virtue* (1791), which tells the story of a beautiful young orphan, unswervingly good and hopeful, ravished and tortured by almost everyone she meets, and finally struck dead by lightning. Napoleon is supposed to have called it "the most abominable book ever engendered by the most depraved imagi-

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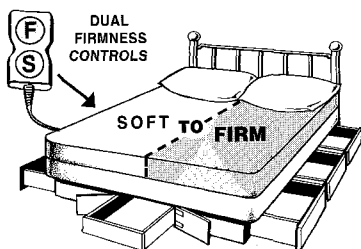
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nation." Others would call it the blackest of black comedies.

Removed from the world as punishment for his crimes, De Sade turned to writing. The result would offend society, and posterity, far more than anything else he had done. Although Gray acknowledges the "heinous, deplorable, seldom surpassed misogyny" in De Sade's work, she also sees him as a pioneer of modern psychology. Rejecting the Enlightenment belief in basic human goodness, he anticipated Freud in recognizing "the grim ambivalence of erotic and destructive impulses, of love and hate, that color most human attachments." In the "terrifying orgies of his fictions" he illustrated the freeing of those impulses from all of civilization's taboos. He also foreshadowed today's "Queer Theorists" with his "highly polymorphous view of human eroticism."

Reading De Sade, however, offers none of the satisfactions of clinical objectivity. His books are moral experiments with the reader as the specimen. De Sade blended the arousing and the revolting so skillfully that it becomes hard to tell one from the other, and hard to resist the relentless propaganda—windy discourses on the falsity of religion and the necessity of murder—with which the pornography is interspersed. The reader gradually finds himself taking pleasure, however guilty, in imagining the worst atrocities. By Sadean logic, this proves that those atrocities are natural, and that nature—especially human nature—is at least as cruel and destructive as it is nurturing and generative.

PRISON not only fostered De Sade's literary career; it also gave him his start as a political orator. On July 2, 1789, a restive crowd had formed outside the Bastille, and for security reasons the commandant of the garrison denied De Sade his regular constitutional along the ramparts. Frustrated, the marquis picked up a funnel (part of his urinal apparatus) and used it as a megaphone to shout out the false news that guards were cutting prisoners' throats inside. Thus De Sade may have helped to instigate the famous storming on July 14, but he gained nothing from it: by then he had been transferred to other confines, and looters destroyed or took all that he had been forced to leave behind, including the manuscript of *The 120 Days of*

Sodom. (It eventually turned up in Germany and was published in 1904.)

De Sade regained his freedom the following April, shortly after the National Assembly voted to release everyone held under *lettres de cachet*. He emerged to find his world vastly changed. The political and social order in which by birth he held a privileged spot was falling apart. His wife refused even to see him, and soon obtained a legal separation. To protect her children's inheritance from their profligate father, she would spend the rest of her life wrestling from him as much of it as she could.

De Sade adapted, personally and politically. Now fifty, he took up with Constance Quesnet, an actress seventeen years his junior. He hid his aristocratic background (at one point claiming to come from a line of simple farmers), adjusted his rhetoric to match the increasingly radical character of the government, and briefly served as president of his Paris *section*. Gray rightly dismisses the Surrealists' claim that "the revolution found [De Sade] devoted body and soul." In private he supported a constitutional monarchy, a system that would have benefited his feudal class, yet he remained "relentlessly opportunistic in his public stances."

In October of 1793, before an audience of tens of thousands, De Sade eulogized the bloodthirsty revolutionary Jean-Paul Marat—an action embarrassing to later admirers. Never mind the disjunction between Marat's radicalism and De Sade's secret monarchism. How could a writer who condemned capital punishment (writing that "the law, cold and impersonal, is a total stranger to the passions which are able to justify in man the cruel act of murder") praise a man who had called for the mass execution of political prisoners? Gray proposes that the speech may have been a "parody of sans-culottes clichés." Perhaps the parody was not subtle enough, for its author was arrested two months later on unwarranted suspicion of reactionary activity. Slated for the guillotine on July 27, 1794, he was passed over, thanks to bribery or sheer luck. A day later Maximilien-François Robespierre was executed, and the Terror came to an end. Here, as throughout the book, Gray lays out the historical background clearly, blending it neatly into her story.

Free once again, De Sade spent the next six years mostly in poverty, occasionally working as a theater prompter and at times even begging in order to survive. His "well-peppered" writing, as he privately called it (while publicly denying authorship), earned him more money but cost him his liberty once more. The police arrested him in March of 1801. Two years later his wife and sons had him moved from prison to the more respectable confines of the Charenton insane asylum, where he finally found success as a dramatist: with the approval of the asylum's director, who considered the activity therapeutic, De Sade directed fellow patients in performances of plays, including several of his own, drawing large audiences of curious Parisians.

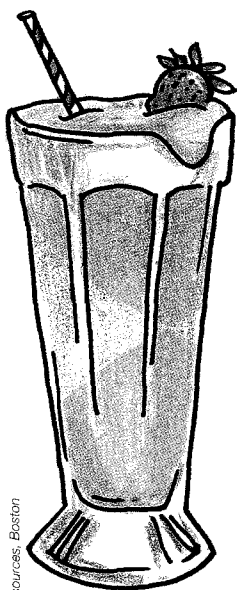
De Sade also enjoyed female companionship at Charenton. Constance, posing as his daughter, lived in adjoining rooms, and a laundress, seventeen at the time of his death, regularly visited him. The girl, Gray writes, regarded the old marquis like "a doddering uncle given to pinching behinds," but he did more than pinch: they had their last round of "little games," as he referred to their diverse sexual encounters, only six days before he died.

Notwithstanding De Sade's countless liaisons, Gray argues that by far the most influential women in his life were his wife and her mother. The one by patiently and lovingly sustaining him for as long as she did, the other by imprisoning him and thereby forcing him to channel his energies, the two made possible his literary career. Gray remains surprisingly ambivalent about this achievement, declining to decide whether Pélagie's sacrifice was "for good or for worse."

At Home With the Marquis de Sade closes with a description of a mountain spring, its waters cascading down the slopes "with an imperiousness that always strikes me as Dionysian and utterly male" and issuing as a river that irrigates croplands and turns mill wheels. Gray offers this as a metaphor for De Sade's wild sexuality, contained though never fully tamed by civilization, which finally found an outlet in his pen. It is a pretty image, but an oddly fertile one to use about a writer whose work scorns mothers, the maternal, and human reproduction itself. If De Sade's life is a story of civilization's triumph over barbarism, the victory was a pyrrhic one. ☼

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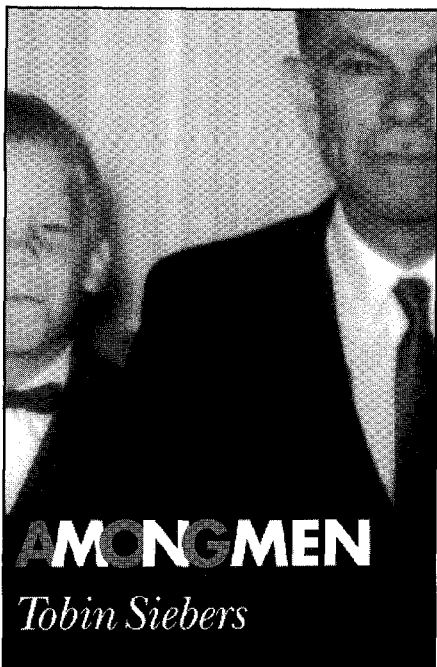


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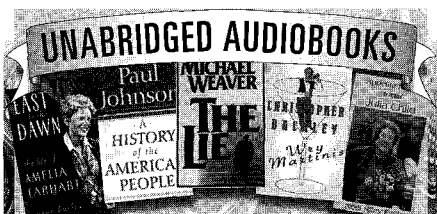


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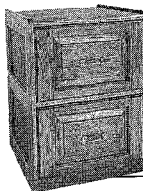
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What Makes Poetry “Poetic”?

by David Barber

THE SOUNDS OF POETRY:

A Brief Guide

by Robert Pinsky.
Farrar, Straus and Giroux,
129 pages, \$16.00.

WHAT ever happened to poetry's reading public? Almost everyone with a stake in the matter seems to agree that serious cultural interest in poetry isn't what it used to be. The traditional idea that having at least an acquaintance with major poetry, both classical and modern, constitutes a necessary part of any respectable intellectual portfolio appears to have given way to the attitude that an affinity for poetry qualifies one for membership in an insular subculture, if not something closer to a secret society.

Robert Pinsky, who is currently serving his second term as perhaps the most visible U.S. poet laureate to date, has written a short book that should go a long way toward reuniting poetry and the public. It is a manual of proposals on how to read poems—or, more accurately, how to “hear more of what is going on in poems.” That distinction, in Pinsky's view, is vital, and it forms the premise for his succinct and lucid guide to enhancing one's understanding of poetry through a greater awareness of the “vocal nature of the art.” The upshot is an achievement for which there is surprisingly little precedent: an authoritative yet accessible introduction to the tools of the poet's trade that can be read with profit by the serious student and the amateur alike.

Over the past thirty years Pinsky has earned distinction as a trenchant critic (*The Situation of Poetry*), an enterprising translator (*Dante's Inferno*), and, most notably, a prolific poet of broad scope and many-sided gifts (his volume of collected poems, *The Figured Wheel*, was published to wide acclaim in 1996). Not incidental to the work at hand, he

also had what some would consider the mixed blessing of studying at Stanford University under the late poet and critic Yvor Winters, a brilliant but fabulously truculent figure now best remembered for fiercely attacking poets who in his judgment displayed an imperfect command of traditional verse techniques. An unreconstructed formalist, Winters patrolled the precinct of contemporary poetry like a cop walking a beat; Pinsky, who has written impressive poems in both “received” and “open” forms, is in contrast tolerably liberal-minded regarding issues of aesthetic law and order. That his book owes a certain debt to Winters's severe discipline but is in no way an act of discipleship is a credit to the stoutness of his critical temperament: he has absorbed the soundest aspects of Winters's conservatism without inheriting the least trace of his mentor's punitive disposition.

What Pinsky has produced is in essence a handbook on prosody—though, significantly, he nowhere alludes to that technical term for the study of versification and its expressive effects. Yet in saving his readers from what another scholar has called “the beast of terminology,” Pinsky is not simply making an egalitarian concession to accessibility but taking a stand on principle. Pinsky insists that all of us already have “finely developed powers” for discerning the shades and nuances of language: that “hearing-knowledge” is part of the standard cognitive equipment we acquire from infancy and employ instinctively in routine banter and chitchat. “It is almost as if we sing to one another all day,” Pinsky submits on the first page with typically sly charm.

Are we all unwitting prosodists, then? Well, no; and therein hangs the gist of Pinsky's engaging approach to shedding light on the mastery of poetic craft. On the one hand, his point is that the rhythmic patterns of accent and pitch that form the basis of English metric occur naturally in the modulation of the speaking voice; without them we could hardly make ourselves understood. On the other hand, when Robert Frost composes lines such as

I had the swirl and ache
From sprays of honeysuckle
That when they're gathered shake
Dew on the knuckle.

those familiar verbal tones and inflections take on a charged resonance missing from workaday locutions. What makes the difference is the versification: the casting of phrases into distinct vocal cadences that enable a listener, Pinsky writes, to “detect their presence without a printed version of the poem.” Taken by itself, this may sound suspiciously like a truism—and indeed, there is nothing especially startling about the touchstone concepts that inform Pinsky’s account of poetry’s inner workings. The great virtue of his treatment lies in his demonstration that paying closer attention to how poems like Frost’s work—how the flow of language is measured, how the length of a line builds expectation and tension, how the interplay within patterns of sounds produces audible dynamics that are pleasing and stirring—is a technical concern of the most profound kind, instrumental in appreciating the full import of what Pinsky likes to call the “technology of poetry.”

On the face of it, that turn of phrase may seem faintly heretical. In the event, however, it is indicative of Pinsky’s finely developed powers as a demystifier that his analogy turns out to be uplifting instead of unsettling, emblematic of poetry’s “special intimacy” as an ancient oral medium conceived for the purpose of committing ideas and feelings to memory. It also proves to be the rationale for his focus on the acoustics of poems and his emphasis on recitation. “When I say to myself a poem by Emily Dickinson or George Herbert,” he writes, “the artist’s medium is my breath. The reader’s breath and hearing embody the poet’s words. This makes the art physical, intimate, vocal, and individual.”

This is about as close as *The Sounds of Poetry* comes to advancing a theory of poetics, and it is only by way of brisk introduction to what emerges as an invigorating session of talking shop. Why are poems written in lines, and why do the lines break where they do? How do the mechanics of English meter operate, and why is it that artful verse measure is seldom strictly regular? How can a reader acquire a reliable feel for the qualities of rhythm, tempo, and cadence that give a memorable poem its visceral appeal and expressive resonance? Is “free verse” really free—and if so, what

has it been liberated from? Pinsky’s sensible answers to these questions—for instance, that lines of poetry need to be understood as notations for the voice, and that rhythm is the “sound of an actual line” while meter is the “abstract pattern” that stands behind it—are never doctrinaire, nor do they appeal to abstruse expertise. The prevailing atmosphere is less that of a solemn classroom lecture than that of a spirited audio tour, with Pinsky offering up various devices and motifs for inspection and providing a lively running commentary on how to fine-tune the ear to respond to the distinctive verbal energies that make poetry “poetic.”

PINSKY’S idea that sound dictates sense can be seen in this example—the first five lines of a lyric poem by William Shakespeare’s contemporary Ben Jonson:

I now think, Love is rather
deaf than blind,
For else it could not be
That she
Whom I adore so much
should so slight me,
And cast my love behind.

And here is part of what Pinsky has to say about the “appealing show-off quality” of the poem’s sense of line:

The run-over lines and pauses, the varying line lengths, the varying way the unit of syntax (that is, the grammatical phrases) coincides with the unit of rhythm (that is, the lines) or does not coincide—all of these create an expressive, flamboyant whole. The poem speeds up and slows down many different ways in the course of these five lines. Though the lines are all made of iambic feet, the variation in pace and emphasis is great—greater than could be easily attained in a comparable thirty-one words of prose.

Pinsky is equally attentive to poems with no fixed meter or rhyme scheme. Thus, shortly after sizing up the “flamboyant” Jonson snippet, he turns to poems by Robert Frost and William Carlos Williams, American contemporaries with polar aesthetic sensibilities, making a persuasive case for how the sinuous structure of Frost’s “To Earthward” (quoted above) and of the following stanza from a decidedly unadorned poem by

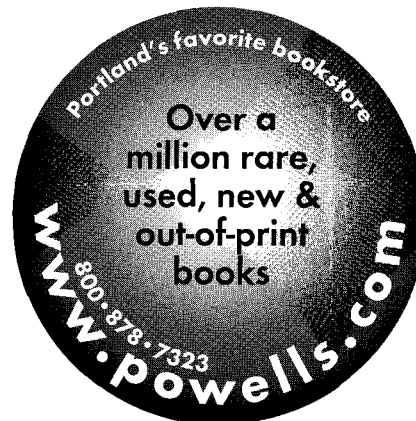
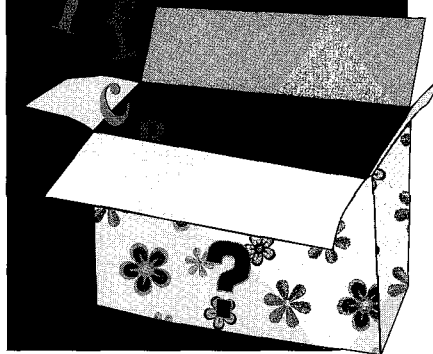
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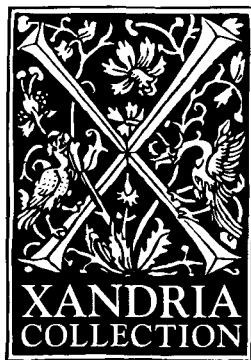
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Williams ("To a Poor Old Woman") have much in common.

They taste good to her
They taste good
to her. They taste
good to her

Both poems dramatize the relation of "vocal alertness to sensory alertness" by "the angling of syntax into line and stanza at interesting tilts." For Pinsky any diligent reading of poetry must take account of the structural elements of sound that are inherent in the language itself.

Considered as a contribution to the line of edifying essays on metrics and

poetics, a genre with a history nearly as long as English poetry itself, Pinsky's slim primer can hardly be said to break new ground. But that is not its ambition. With any luck the book will find its way into the hands not only of apprentice poets in graduate creative-writing programs but also of lapsed poetry lovers and prodigal English majors—so many of whom, hearsay evidence strongly suggests, have been conditioned to question their instinctual belief that poems should be sources of delight rather than calls to duty. For them, *The Sounds of Poetry* contains an implicit message—even, one might go so far as to say, a moral: hearing is believing. ☼

BRIEF REVIEWS



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Morrow, 374 pages,
\$26.00.

Mr. Naveen is the founder of an organization designed to raise public awareness of marine resources and the project director of the Antarctic Site Inventory. He counts penguins. It is thought that an ongoing census of penguin populations may provide useful information on climate changes. In any case, Mr. Naveen loves and admires his birds, which consist of gentoos (fairly easy to study because a bit timid), Adélies (livelier), and chinstraps (plain belligerent). They are all described as brushtailed. The tails are helpful in counting eggs, which remains a hilariously risky business for the snooping naturalist. Mr. Naveen does very well indeed in describing the charm of penguins, the beauty of the Antarctic, the strange magic of the area, and the doings (which are sometimes close to demented) of the many explorers who have worked there. He also repeats informa-

tion, throws in needless autobiography, rivals Mrs. Malaprop in his indifference to the dictionary, and occasionally attempts literary elegance. It may be a bit churlish to mention these deficiencies, but they do get in the way of all his good information and of his fine and funny penguins.

Werewolves in Their Youth

by Michael Chabon.
Random House, 212 pages,
\$22.95.

Mr. Chabon's short stories center on men who are having trouble with women, money, or their own ineptitude. The tales are not monotonous, because the troubles are as varied as the victims. The misfit young werewolves are genuinely sinister. The overcautious young husband merits sympathy along with chuckles. The case of the psychologist who is writing a book of advice for parents but cannot cope with his tantrum-prone small daughter is neat comic satire. The final story is an imitation of H. P. Lovecraft but not irrelevant to the author's theme of male subjugation.

tion. Mr. Chabon's boys are a sad lot, but he plays fair. His girls are no bargain either.

More Bread or I'll Appear

by Emer Martin.
Houghton Mifflin, 271 pages,
\$23.00.

Ms. Martin's inventive control of incident, her ability to create eccentric characters who are also convincing, and her acerbic, obliquely comic style steadily divert the reader. They also delay the realization that her novel is either a black comedy or a lament about the combination of Ireland's history and modern condition which produces a lunatic in every family's attic. The children of Ms. Martin's sample family are brought up on "television, history, and the church; death as entertainment, death as catalyst, death as salvation." They scatter about the world, surviving some amazing adventures on the way, but the bitter heritage remains.

Duke Hamilton Is Dead!

by Victor Stater.
Hill and Wang, 288 pages,
\$26.00.

The fourth Duke of Hamilton was Scottish and a Tory—more or less. The fourth Baron Mohun was Cornish and a Whig. Both were ambitious, well-known politicians and, like most of their peers, heavily in debt. Through family marriages, both had inheritance claims to a valuable estate. On the morning of November 15, 1712, they duelled in Hyde Park. It was no first blood, honor satisfied affair. They fought to kill, and both succeeded. Lady Mohun was annoyed because her husband's bloody corpse damaged a bedspread. Lady Hamilton fled the dank ancestral stronghold to become a social ornament in London. The inheritance row continued to drift "upon the sluggish waters of the Court of Chancery." To the country at large, the affair was a symptom of the bitter quarrel over who was to succeed the ailing Queen Anne. Mr. Stater approaches the case from that point of view, providing an interesting and informative study of a period when changing social and financial patterns made politics a truly dangerous

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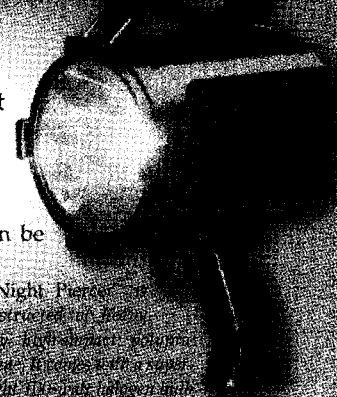
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P	G	F	I	R	S	T	S	T	R	I	N	G
E	R	O	S	A	M	B	E	A	T	L	E	S
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A	N	L	C	B	O	S	T	O	N	W	N	V
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D	I	S	C	U	S	S	L	E	T	H	E	O
D	E	M	O	S	T	H	E	N	E	S	D	N

"Central Square"

Across: 3. FIR(ST + ST) + RING 10. EROS(e) 11. BE + AT + LES 12. RAINBOW (homophone of reign + beau) 13. FLOE (homophone) 16. BOS + TON (sob rev.) 17. MALLE + T 18. (W)ER(e) + MINE 20. B(RE)ATH 21. R + EEL + E + R (R + E + Lee rev.) 24. LO(O)SER 27. O + RIG + IN 29. A + MP + ERE (rev.) 30. RO(TUN)D (nut rev.) 32. JE + SUIT 34. ERIN (hidden rev.) 35. J + OT DOWN (won't do anag.) 36. DISCUS + S 37. THE + O 38. DEMOSTHENES (anag.) Down: 1. PERAMBULATE (anag.) 2. GRAN)ARY 3. FOIL (double def.) 4. RABBIT (homophone) 5. S(M)OOTH 6. SETTER (anag.) 7. T(AG)ORE 8. I + L + L + WILL 9. N + EON 14. E(VER AND A)NON (none rev.) 15. CLAUSE (homophone) 19. M(ER)ITS (ire rev.) 22. SOP + HIS + M 23. SIN + E + WE'D 25. E + REBUS 26. RES(IST) 27. ORIOLE (homophone) 28. ROTTEN (anag.) 31. E + R + IE 33. COHS (homophone)

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game. The story includes much anecdote, savage journalism, and characters ranging from a polished Irish scalawag to Peter the Great.

Controversies and Commanders

by Stephen W. Sears.
Houghton Mifflin, 287 pages,
\$26.00.

The "Dispatches From the Army of the Potomac" that Mr. Sears briskly discusses in this selective history of the Civil War are, on the whole, deplorable episodes involving professional rivalry, self-serving chicanery, and plain lies. A defense of "Fighting Joe" Hooker comes as welcome variety. As the author puts it, "It was a rare moment indeed when the generals of the Union's principal army marched in step, or even in the same direction." Robert E. Lee had reason to be grateful for those men. The Union dead did not.

The Mummies of Ürümchi

by Elizabeth Wayland Barber.
Norton, 240 pages,
\$35.00.

Ms. Barber is a widely known expert on ancient textiles. She begins her study of mummies that have been found in the Tarim Basin, in Central Asia, with a man buried around 1000 B.C. at Cherchen, on the southern rim of the Silk Road. He was six feet six inches tall, with light-brown hair, round eye sockets, a high-bridged nose, and a lush beard—neatly trimmed. He was an unquestionably Caucasian type in an area long thought to have been inhabited exclusively by Mongols—and there are many similar mummies, dressed in colorful woolen clothes, leather footwear, and a variety of felt bonnets. They did not have metal or pottery grave goods—only cloth, baskets, and small bunches of ephedra twigs. As Ms. Barber points out, the absence of metal and pottery may mean merely that such items were ritually unsuitable. The attempt to identify those long-gone people leads Ms. Barber from weaving patterns to the history of languages to the development of woolly sheep to climate changes to the records of early Chinese administrators and early modern explor-

ers. Apart from arousing curiosity about the presence so far to the east of people who probably spoke a relative of Celtic, the book is a splendid illustration of the variety of disciplines involved in archaeological research. It is also full of odd bits of information, such as the proprietary instincts of archaeologists, who become so possessive about the subjects of their study that they will defend people who have been dead for 3,000 years from any accusation of incompetence.

**Suzanne Valadon:
The Mistress
of Montmartre**

by June Rose.
St. Martin's, 304 pages,
\$25.95.

Valadon, growing up poor in nineteenth-century Paris, became an artists' model in her teens. She worked for anyone and everyone, posing for Puvis de Chavannes's ethereal nymphs and Renoir's luscious pousies. She taught herself to draw and eventually to paint, with advice and encouragement from Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec. She drew with a firm line and a total lack of sentimentality, which limited her sales to the discriminating few. She made no concessions to what was considered, even in her bohemian world, proper female behavior or suitable female subject matter. Her son (father unknown, a claim possibly genuine for once) became the painter Maurice Utrillo. She led an amazing life, supplying her biographer with a mass of anecdote and gossip, an exhilarating assemblage of associates, and the most exciting milieu in the history of Western art. Ms. Rose makes admirable use of the splendid material she has to work with.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

Recent books by Atlantic authors:

Night Music: Poems by L. E. Sissman selected by Peter Davison, with a foreword by Edward Hirsch. Houghton Mifflin/Mariner, 160 pages, \$14.00. L. E. Sissman's column "Innocent Bystander" appeared in fifty-five issues of *The Atlantic*, beginning in December of 1970. Peter Davison is the poetry editor of *The Atlantic*.



THE PUZZLER

by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon

Hide and Seek

In order to complete this puzzle, solvers must play the role of "It" in a game of Hide and Seek. After all the clue answers (whose starting points but not lengths are given) have been entered, the grid will still have some empty squares. These squares may be filled once you find the hidden players that cross through them in any of eight directions (forward or backward horizontally, vertically, or diagonally). The squares filled in this manner will identify the hiders as a group, and one square, which contains two letters, will symbolically reward the successful seeker. Clue answers include seven capitalized words.

The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 117.

1		2	3		4	5		6		7	8
	9						10		11		
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Across

- Reset a VCR to jump around while playing
- Suit excavators' needs
- One pursuing fabric with a Russian tag
- So chic, wrapping article from the East
- Croak, due to mistakenly swallowing iodine (*two words*)
- Bright girl finally accepted by school instructional division
- Rating for a family movie with talented Hollywood legend
- Often changed limits of load by an order of magnitude
- Turn dirt around front of plant
- Hold back on account of dangerous animal
- Passage from some deadly Cherubini opera
- Gray, greasy stuff put through another round of cooking
- Shelter housing one occupant

- Act fast, spinning big wheels (*two words*)
- North American tuber brought back from a pre-Columbian culture
- A melodramatic actor following great, famous dancer
- Flowers in fruity dishes keeping a long time
- Like an airhead, messed up tidy eating zone
- New cinema's chilling character?

Down

- Blanketed in covers, sleeper initially drifts
- French wine conveying excellent mood
- Virtuous in behavior after the mass is said
- Writing a cowpoke's name with a carpenter's tool
- Move stealthily south, not doing anything in particular
- Have a place with a range
- High-spirited teammate of Michael Jordan wearing tee in upset
- Full schedule except for the second day
- Wrong about good omen
- Toss disc for canine
- In backing college officials, university service organization called for investigation
- Round bodies board bus, odd ones out
- Philosopher Taylor holding wacky be-in
- Horse feed includes a large piece of fruit
- Taboo involving treatment of Mets hitters
- Get hot about game official being far from sharp
- Punk Mr. Ice-T composed in verse
- Box in facility outside of North Carolina
- Emotional speech took place on time
- A borderline way of attracting attention?

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.

WORD COURT

by Barbara Wallraff

The word *America* appears in print and is heard in conversation and song. I mentally insert *United States of* in front of it, hoping that the user isn't referring to South, Central, or another part of North America.

My dictionary, Webster's Ninth New Collegiate, does not list the word. However, the Webster's definition of the word *American* is "of or relating to America"—hmm! Is it correct to use the word by itself? Is there really such a place?

Wendell Corrow
Barkhamsted, Conn.

Some dictionaries, including both Webster's Ninth and the current, tenth edition, isolate most proper names in appendixes, listing only words derived from them in the main body of the text. You'll note that the main body of Webster's under *United States* doesn't say anything about a specific country but gives only a generic meaning ("a federation of states . . .").

People on the American continents outside the United States can definitely be touchy about it when we say that we're *Americans*. But what else are we supposed to call ourselves? *U.S. citizens*? Call yourself that if you like—it sounds too bureaucratic for my taste. Besides, there are those songs you mention, such as "*America the Beautiful*" and "*God Bless America*." And our country came into being with the *American* Revolution, and many organizations bear names like *American Airlines*, and the *American Civil Liberties Union*, and the *ASPCA*, and on and on.

The etiquette involved may be questionable when U.S. residents refer to themselves as *Americans* in front of Canadians, Mexicans, or South or Central Americans—a bit as it would be if Protes-



stants tried to distinguish themselves from Catholics by asserting that they were Christians. Nonetheless, both *American* and *America* are well established internationally as pertaining to the United States, and there's no reason we should deny ourselves the use of these words when talk-

ing either with our fellow *Americans* or with people who live on other continents.

Why do I always see in the print media "obviates the need to . . ." instead of simply "obviates"? I am astonished at the frequency of this. For example, from an article in my local paper about a trial: "*Reynolds' appearance on his own behalf—and denial that he had sex with Heard—obviated the need to call his wife, who could have made a strong impression on jurors. . . .*" The irony, of course, is that the word *obviate* obviates the need to.

Scott Marquardt
Cicero, Ill.

There are two points of view on *obviate*. According to the one you subscribe to, which most recent dictionaries support, the word means "make unnecessary"—and who would ever say *made unnecessary the need to* . . . ? According to the other, more traditional point of view, which older dictionaries and the *Oxford English Dictionary* support, the word has to do with clearing away potential obstacles—meaning something more like "do away with." In your example



the obstacle would be the need, not the calling, and *did away with the need to call his wife* would be more nearly what was meant than *did away with calling his wife*, so in this view *obviated the need to* is what's needed after all.

These possibilities have little common

ground. Anyone who tries to fulfill both at once will end up with the idea of making obstacles unnecessary—not an idea that arises often. Come to think of it, there's a third possible point of view on *obviate*: that it has two meanings.

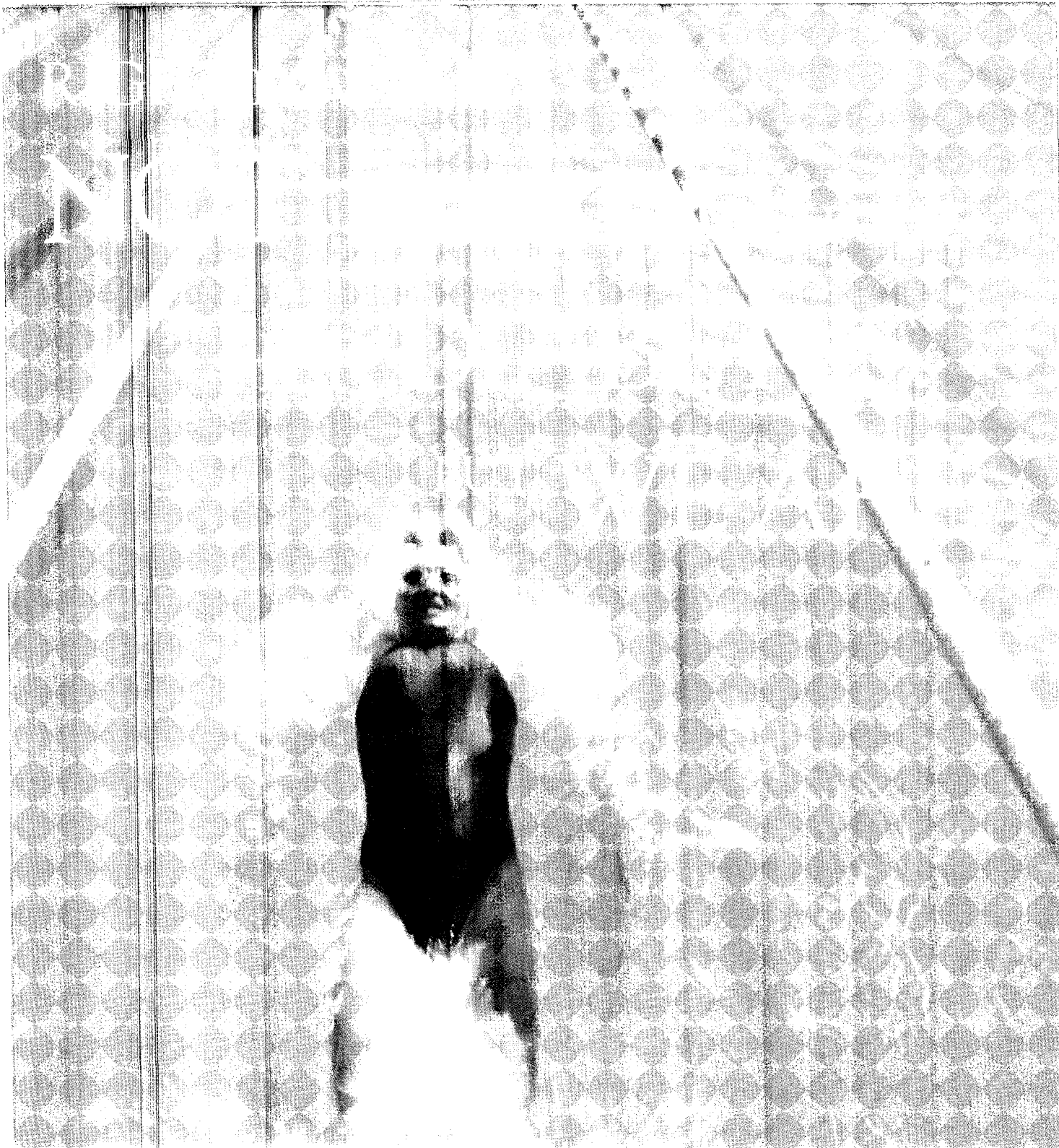
Describing my attributes to a prospective client in Princeton, New Jersey (I am a freelance writer), I stated that writing long pieces—brochures and such—is my *forte*, pronouncing it *fort*. During the ensuing discussion, the man interviewing me referred to my *forte*, pronouncing it *for-tay*—not so subtly letting me know that he felt I had used the incorrect pronunciation. I couldn't help hearing a hint of condescension in his tone. However, I do believe my pronunciation was correct: *forte* pronounced *fort* is a thing a person does particularly well, as opposed to *forte* pronounced *for-tay*, a musical term meaning "loud." I believe this man's mistake is a very common one. Then again, do the wordsmiths in Princeton know something that those in less academic communities do not?



Sheila Dyan
Cherry Hill, N.J.

Your interviewer does seem to have had exceptional knowledge of how to sow self-doubt in others. You're quite right about the preferred pronunciations for *forte* in its different meanings—and right, too, not to have tried to correct a sales prospect's pronunciation.

Have you had a language dispute that you would like this column to resolve? Write to Word Court in care of *The Atlantic Monthly*, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or send E-mail to MsGrammar@theatlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court.



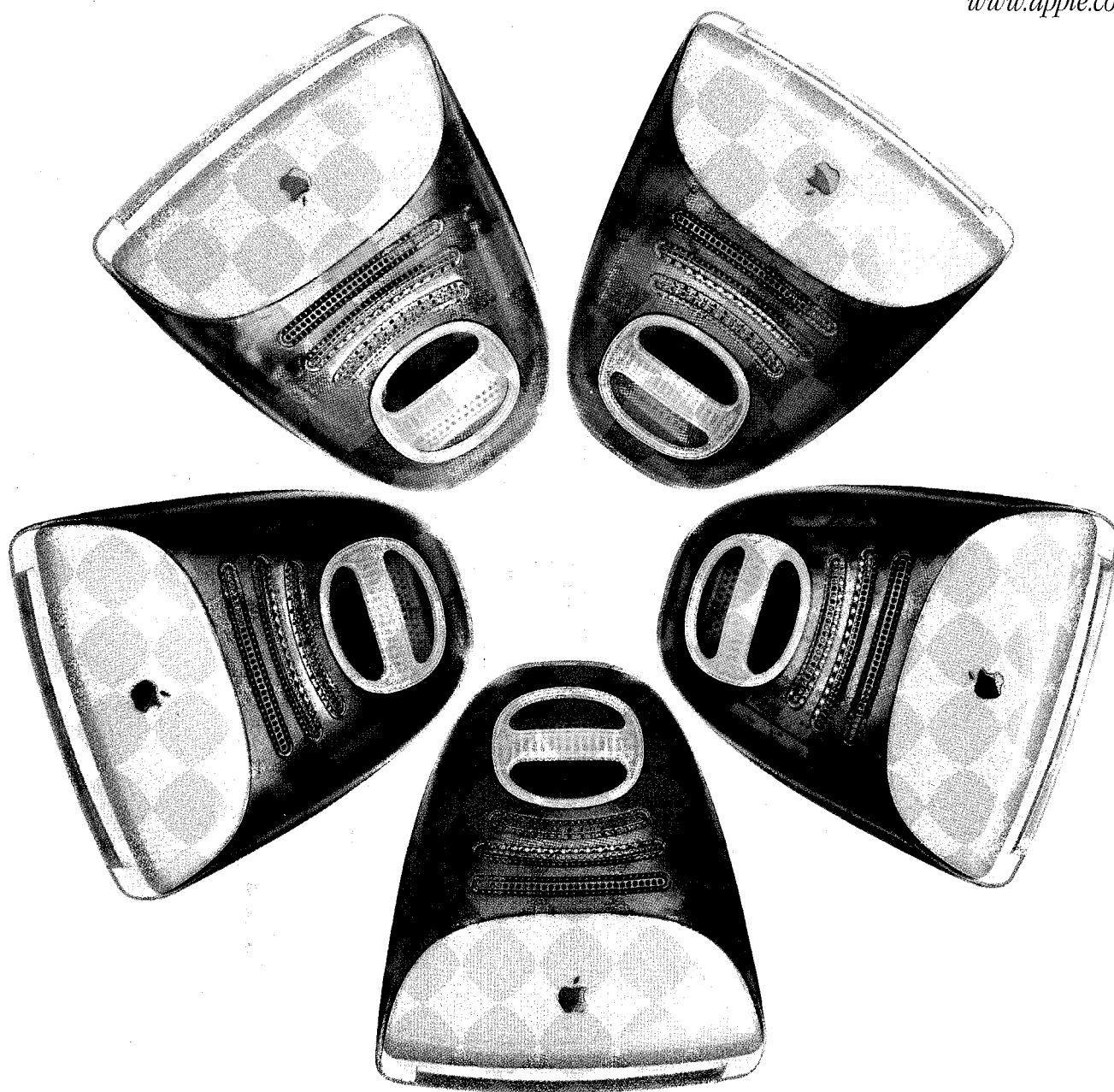
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